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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE AND SEQUEL PREVIEW

WIZARD

ANIME INSIDER

SPECIAL
HOLIDAY
ISSUE

50

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DVD
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REVIEWED

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- DBZ's Cell Steals Christmas
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Asuka Langley

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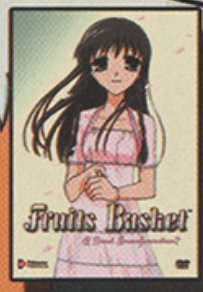
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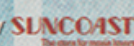
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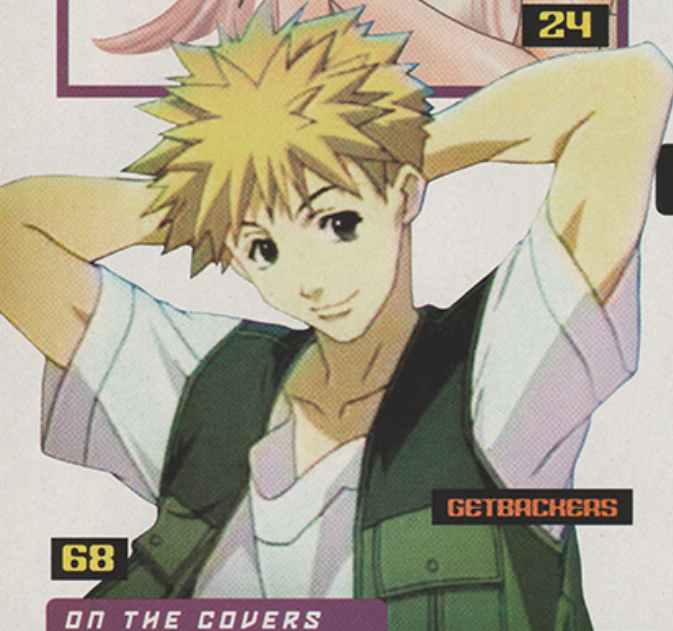


ATARI



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GETBACKERS

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ON THE COVERS



Asuka from *Evangelion* is sitting pretty on our list of the top 50 anime DVDs on page 34, while Ryoko from *Tenchi Muyo!* dares you to unravel the Tenchi timeline on page 60.

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FROM THE TOP

OUR SPECIAL ISSUE HAS SPECIAL ISSUES



DASH JOCKEY Our annual special issue also means the annual breaking of Managing Editor Robert Bricken.

"Rob!" they said. "Let's do something special with *Anime Insider* #18."

I was immediately suspicious. "Like what?" I asked. "Let's go all out! List off the top 50 anime DVD series of all time! Review all of CLAMP's manga series! Explain how all those darned *Tenchi Muyo!* series actually fit together!"

"Well, that certainly seems special," I agreed.

"And we'll do it in half the time!" they added.

"What?!"

"We'll put the issue out between our regular bi-monthly issues, just like last year! It'll be special!" They beamed at me.

"Fools!" I yelled in their faces. "Don't you remember what happened last time? Don't you remember the screams? The thousands of dollars we've spent on therapy since then? My god, man—they still haven't found the body of little Jimmy!"

They shrugged. "Special," they whispered.

"Gah!" I screamed, flinging my coffee to the ground. "And you think that we can somehow fit all of those great features into a single issue, in half the time of a regular issue? You maniacs!"

Yet they were not to listen to reason. So we pulled the 12-hour days, called in all the favors we had, begged a lot of favors we didn't, and shed tears. (Executive Editor Andrew Kardon cried like a schoolgirl on several occasions; Associate Editor Summer Mullins did as well, but her being a girl, we were less impressed.)

We hope you appreciate the effort. And if anyone's seen Associate Editor Zac Bertschy—or his torso—please give us a call.

Robert Bricken
Managing Editor

MEET THE PRESS



ANDREW KARDON,
Executive Editor

HOLIDAY WISH: "All I want this holiday is the fabled One Piece! The price I could get for that treasure on eBay would set me up for life...I mean...uh, being King of the Pirates would rule!"



ZAC BERTSCHY,
Associate Editor

HOLIDAY WISH: "Yami Yugi's haircut. Twelve bottles of hair gel, \$450 worth of color jobs and 17 separate trips to the stylist and I STILL can't get it right. What's your secret, Yugi?!"



SUMMER MULLINS,
Associate Editor

HOLIDAY WISH: "The annoyingly cute Haro full-size replica computer case available in Japan. It moves, it talks, it scares co-workers away from your desk with its brightly colored fixed grin."

MASTHEAD

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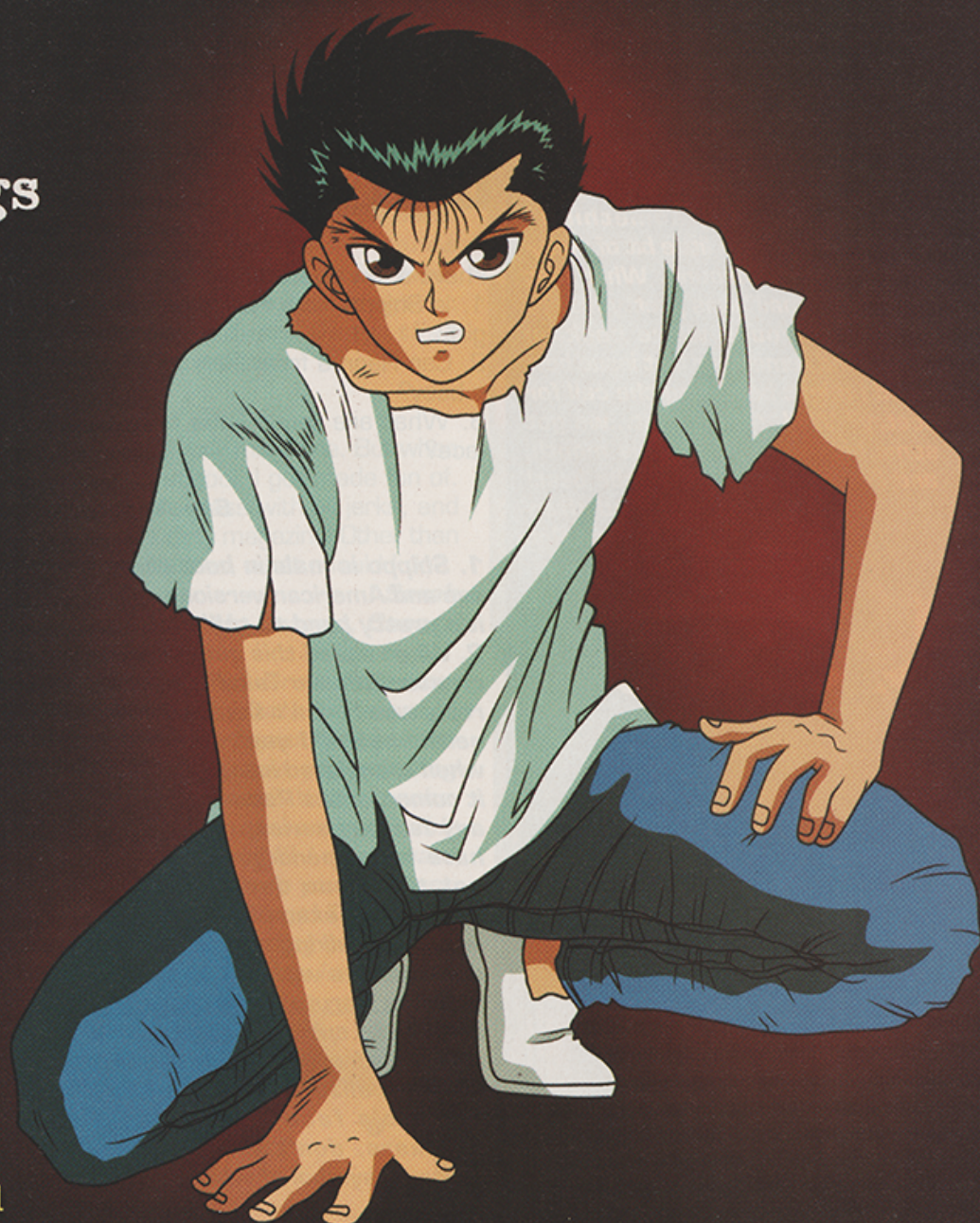
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ANIMAIL!

YOU'RE FANS, YOUR MAIL

Hey all, welcome to this special holiday issue of *Anime Insider*! I, Tom Root, will be playing Santa for the next some-odd pages of reader mail, unwrapping letters from all of you and delivering presents in the form of, uh, answers to your letters. What a crappy metaphor! Why didn't somebody say something? Anyhow, we cover a little bit of everything this time around. While last issue's "Animail" was pretty wonky, this time around we're back on track! And remember last issue how I said I might be ending the call for poetry? Well, screw that...we got some kick-ass entries this month, and I've printed a few of the best! So let's get to it! And afterwards, the eggnog's on Rob Bricken! Yay!

GOOD LUCK,
E/N! I HOPE I PUT
ENOUGH POSTAGE
ON YOU.

US
MAIL

WOOF!



DEAR A.I.,

I have a few questions for you:

1. Is Shippo from *Inuyasha* a boy or a girl?
2. Can Ranma from *Ranma 1/2* have a baby?
3. What are those lines on Naruto's face?

Natalie
San Angelo, TX

1. Shippo is male in both the Japanese and American versions. Although it's pretty hard to tell!
2. When asked this question, *Ranma* creator Rumiko Takahashi's famous reply was "I don't think about it, and neither should you" (more or less, when translated into English). When it comes to the *Ranma* universe (and any fantasy series, really), you just have to suspend your disbelief and not think too deeply about such things. For example, Mickey Mouse is a giant talking mouse who owns a dog. Just go with it.
3. When *Naruto*'s title character was a baby, the spirit of a troublesome fox demon was sealed inside him in order to neutralize it. The markings on *Naruto*'s face kind of look like whiskers, don't they? Kind of an external symbol of what lies within...

KONNICHI WA ANIME INSIDER,

At a recent convention, I searched for the Pioneer booth to load up on freebies (can't go wrong with free stuff!) and check out the latest anime. Instead, I ran across a company named Geneon

with similar titles to Pioneer. Are Pioneer and Geneon the same thing?

Raisa Reano
via cyberspace

Wonder no more—Pioneer and Geneon are the same company, and have been since October 2003. Hence all those DVDs which say Pioneer and Geneon on them. Explains Geneon's Chad Kime, "Pioneer sold their entertainment assets to Dentsu, a huge advertising company in Japan that's been around since 1901. Now that we weren't Pioneer anymore, we had to change our name and Geneon Entertainment was the choice."

So says Geneon. But we did a little undercover reporting, and found out the real truth—they lost it. "Yeah, we had it around, like on the table in the kitchen," says a Geneon rep who wishes to remain unnamed. "That's the last place I saw it. But one day we turned around, and it was gone. Someone must have accidentally thrown it away, or left it in a taxi."

And now, Raisa, you know...the rest of the story.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Ever since you announced the winners of the Bachelor and Bachelorette contest [A.I. #13], I've wondered how Kurama and Faye were doing. Both characters



KURAMA & FAYE

come from two of my favorite anime series. Because I'm a die-hard fan of both, I simply must know!

Kim Dye
Truman, AR

Kurama and Faye hopped the first jet to Maui, where they frolicked in the surf by day and enjoyed colorful cocktails with little umbrellas in them by night! However, Kurama was soon irritated by the way Faye dominated the conversation with mindless chatter about her ex-boyfriends. And Faye didn't much care for the way Kurama hogged the bathroom mirror, making sure his long, flowing locks had just the right amount of bounce. However, with a little joint counseling, Kurama and Faye worked out their squabbles and lived happily ever after. In a gingerbread house. Where it rained Pepsi and snowed fairy dust. The mega-happy end!

DEAR ANIMAIL,

In regards to your call for poems in A.I. #15:

Bright
Of Sailor Moon
Light
On feathered pages
Turn
Anime Insider
Thoughts
In lost dreams
Waft
On Gundam Wing

Faye Griffith
Los Angeles, CA

Rock on! Great job, Faye! But fess up—you've got a lot of notebooks with unicorns on the cover, huh?

DEAR A.I.,

I read in A.I. #15 that you wanted more poems. Here's mine.

Anime is so sweet
All fans know it can't be beat
From a pen the manga starts
Then fills up its readers' hearts
Next to anime the manga goes
And creates our favorite shows
From FLCL that is so loony
To swordplay with our favorite Rurouni
Inuyasha, Fruits Basket, Cowboy Bebop
Yu Yu Hakusho, Wolf's Rain, there is no stop

That's my poem, how impressed are ya?
Oh, by the way, sayonara!

Rachel George
Reading, PA

Yep, gotta give props for rhyming the word "Rurouni." Although I think it sounds more like "macaroni" than "loony." Still, I'm feeling lenient today, so I forgive you.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

What exactly is Kirara from *Inuyasha*?
Susan VanFleet
Columbia, MS



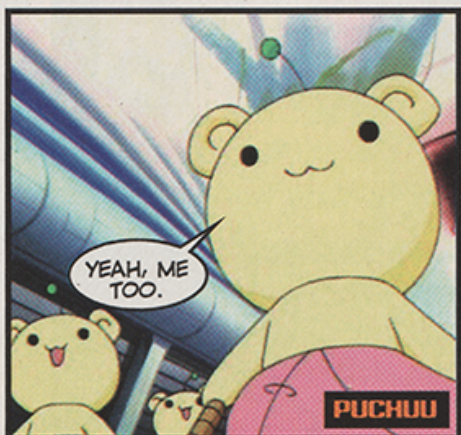
A cat demon.
Hmm. That was a much shorter response than I anticipated. I feel like I should put more words here. Words words words. La la la. Making the answer longer... dum-dee-dum... Okay, that should be plenty.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I always read your magazine. But when I bring it to school, I get made fun of. I'm stuck in a class with all jerks, and they call it a dirty magazine! Other than switching classes, what should I do?

Sarah
Perth, Ontario, Canada

First of all, if this were a dirty magazine, my friends back home would have a lot more respect for me. Second of all, why are you reading magazines in class? You're probably missing out on some valuable educational material! I don't want Anime Insider to keep you from getting into a good college! Third of all, let's say you're reading your magazines in study hall or in between



COSPLAY CAVALCADE

EDWARD ELRIC

BY CAITLIN BEARDS. RANDOLPH, NJ

Even though *Fullmetal Alchemist* wasn't quite out yet at this summer's Otakon, Caitlin Beards got the jump on it by duding up as the show's angst-ridden hero, Edward Elric, with several hundred other FMA-cosplaying fans. Anime licenser FUNimation even had a life-size Alphonse on hand for her to pose with! All the little details were just right; Edward's trademark red jacket, his National Alchemist pocket watch, the buttons on his shirt...heck, Caitlin even had the right belt on! Unfortunately, the clothes don't make the alchemist. When we asked Caitlin to please transmute us a large pizza, she told us she was "busy." Luckily, we had about three hundred other Ed Elrics to go ask!



WEBPOLL

WHICH NEW FALL SHOW ARE YOU MOST ANTICIPATING?

Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 35%

One Piece 19%

Fullmetal Alchemist 31%

Mew Mew Power 7%

MOTOKO

Cast your vote in our latest poll at Anime-Insider.com!

FAN ART



CARD DUELIST SAKURA

JOSEPH PARAISO, PASIG CITY, PHILIPPINES



BROLY DOMINIQUE CHAMPION,

RICHMOND, TX



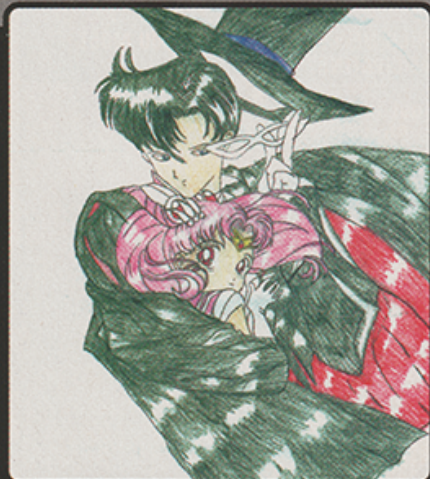
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DIGIMON

JOYCELYN CARRILLO, EDINBURG, TX



TUXEDO MASK AND CHIBI MOON

LOUIE MOON, EL PASO, TX



VASH KATIE NICHOLS,

SYKESVILLE, MD

classes like a good little student, and those jerks are still hassling you. Just close your eyes and pretend they're all Puchuus from Excel Saga. I do that a lot in my daily life, and it really helps.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I'm a huge *Chobits* fan, but there's something I'm confused about. In the manga they call the cute little laptop persocom "Plum," but in the anime they have a different name for it. What's the real name?

Breanna Luke
Salem, OR

Shimbo Hiroshi's laptop persocom is called "Sumomo" in both the English and Japanese versions of the anime. For the manga version, TOKYOPOP merely used the English word for "sumomo," which is plum!

Fun Japanese language factoid: a "momo" is a peach! Now you know the words for both "peach" and "plum"! Personally, I hate fruits and vegetables, so I won't be using these words much in the future.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

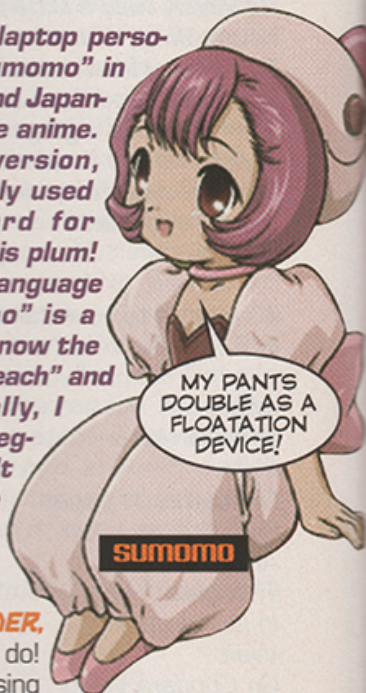
I don't know what to do! I'm afraid that I'm losing interest in anime ever since I started listening to Good Charlotte and obsessing over Benji, a totally hot band member. Before I liked their music, I was obsessing over *Inuyasha*, *Trigun* and *Lupin the 3rd*.

I need help! I don't want to lose interest in either of them—most of all, not Benji! He's too cute with the tattoos and piercings! I'm only 12. What do I do?

Heather Baglio
Tulsa, OK

By the time you're old enough to date Benji, he'll probably be in his late 40s! Yuck! Anime, on the other hand, never gets old. You can watch a *Trigun* DVD 20 years from now and Vash will still be the same age.

But don't worry about it. Just follow whatever interests strike your fancy. As long as those interests aren't anything like Yoh Asakura's...



SUMOMO

Send your fan art to *Anime Insider*, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920 or e-mail to animeinsider@aol.com. All submissions MUST include the character names and YOUR full name and address. Be the first artist on your block to get your art printed! Booyaka!

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WORDS FOR THE WISE

What are they saying? What do they mean? Find out here!

BENTO—[BEN-toh] A cold lunch served in a special Japanese lunchbox that has separate compartments. Usually carried to school by children.

CHIBI—[CHEE-bee] Japanese for "small" or even "shrimpy." People call Edward Elric "chibi" since he's so short.

HENTAI—[HEN-tie] Japanese for "pervert." Refers to naughty anime and manga, too.

ITOKO—[EE-toe-ko] A cousin. Don't forget the suffix "-san" when being polite!

JISHO—[JEE-show] A dictionary. If you had a *jisho*, you wouldn't need this section every issue!

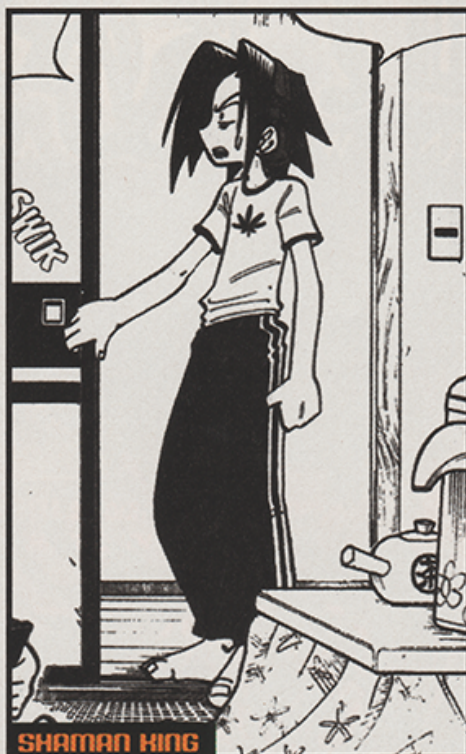
-KUN—[KOON] A suffix, like -san or -sensei, added to the end of the names of boys and young men. Considered affectionate.

OKA—[OH-bah] An aunt. "-san" applies here too, unless you're a jerk.

OJI—[OH-jee] An uncle. "Well, I'll be a monkey's oji!"

MANGA-KA—[MAN-gah-kah] Japanese term for a manga creator; usually someone who both draws and writes their work.

SEIYUU—[SAY-yoo] A Japanese voice actor or actress.



YO, ANIME INSIDER!

I have been wondering about Yoh Asakura from *Shaman King*. I'm a huge fan, but I've seen this plant on his shirts! I hate to say it, but here goes...the plant looks like a pot leaf! Anyway, it's only in the manga. Could you look at it yourself?

Jessica Slaby
Rock Creek, OH

Yep, Yoh's taste in apparel definitely includes the universal symbol for marijuana. The offending flora has been edited out of Viz's graphic novels for obvious reasons. Although you're either reading the Japanese version or—gasp!—watching a fan-sub, since they cut that out of the English version entirely. Bad otaku! Bad!

And, need I say it? Don't do drugs, everybody! They turn your brain into cream of mushroom soup.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

You know how the Gundams in *Gundam SEED* all have serial numbers like GAT-X103? Well, I'd like to know what the "GAT" stands for.

Anthony Pineda
Anaheim, CA

I figured it was probably "Gundam something something." But nope! "GAT" stands for "Gressorial Armament Tactical." Hmm. "Armament"

and "tactical" are words I'd heard before, but I had to look up "gressorial." Turns out it means "Adapted for walking or having limbs adapted for walking." Thank you, American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition!

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I just wanted to tell you guys that your magazine rocks! I wish more guys could be like you, Tom Root! If only they could love anime and have a good personality. I hope my letter makes it into your mag, but if not, that's cool, as long as Tom reads it and knows how cool he is!

Ashley Altemose
Bowmanstown, PA

Oh, hell yeah I'm gonna put it in the magazine! I asked if I could put it on the cover of the magazine, but that idea got shot down. I also asked if I could put it on one of those little blow-in subscription cards that are always falling out of magazines, but that idea got nixed too. So I printed your letter on some t-shirts and passed them out around the office. Strangely enough, nobody's wearing them. Hmm.

Okay, time to get out of here before my ego gets any bigger. I'll be back next issue with more letters, more answers and more letters that tell me how great I am. Later, peeps! ☺

—Tom Root

Time for Tom Root to close his eyes and imagine the Puchuus. Ahhh...there they are...

Send yer letters to:

ANIME INSIDER

151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

or e-mail to
AnimeInsider@aol.com

CULTURE SHOCKER

Why the Japanese do those weird things they do



In spite of the fact that less than one percent of Japanese people are Christian, Christmas is still a pretty big deal across the Pacific. Without all the religious aspects, the holiday has

become a bit more relaxed and groovy—for instance, the Japanese tend to eschew the typical Christmas Eve dinner of turkey and such in favor of a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken. When KFC hit Japan in the '70s, it began marketing "Christmas chicken" during the holidays, trying to co-opt the popularity of turkey in Western Christmas dinners. It paid off in spades, and is now a Japanese Christmas tradition; many people pre-order buckets (yes, really), and others stand in lines for hours to get their Original Recipe presents from the Colonel! ■ ZB

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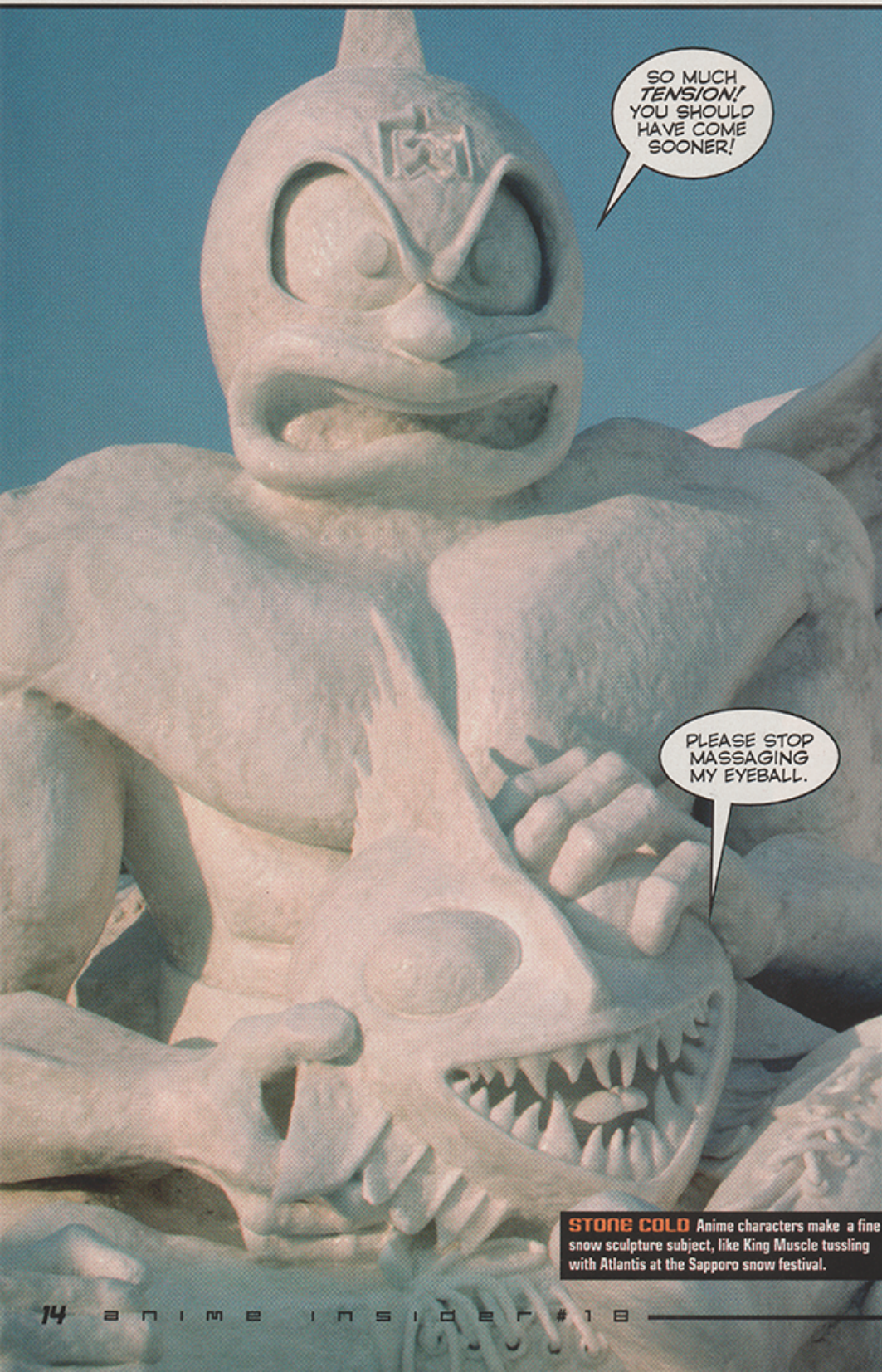
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SPEED LINES

CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS WITH ANIME FLAIR

SNOW DAYS

Even Santa Claus himself bows to winter festivals in Japan



STONE COLD Anime characters make a fine snow sculpture subject, like King Muscle tussling with Atlantis at the Sapporo snow festival.

While Christmas in Japan means little more than Santa and KFC X-Mas meals, that doesn't mean that the Japanese lack holiday spirit. On the contrary, with their multitude of winter festivals, the Japanese have almost an overabundance of spirit...and holidays.

Probably the most important Japanese winter holiday is also celebrated in the States: New Year's. But while we tend to concentrate on alcohol and partying, Japan's New Year's focuses on praying for good fortune in the coming year. At midnight on December 31, bells across the country ring out 108 peals to summon families to their local Buddhist temple, where they make donations and pray. For an extra donation, you can also draw a fortune for the coming year or buy a good luck charm before you leave.

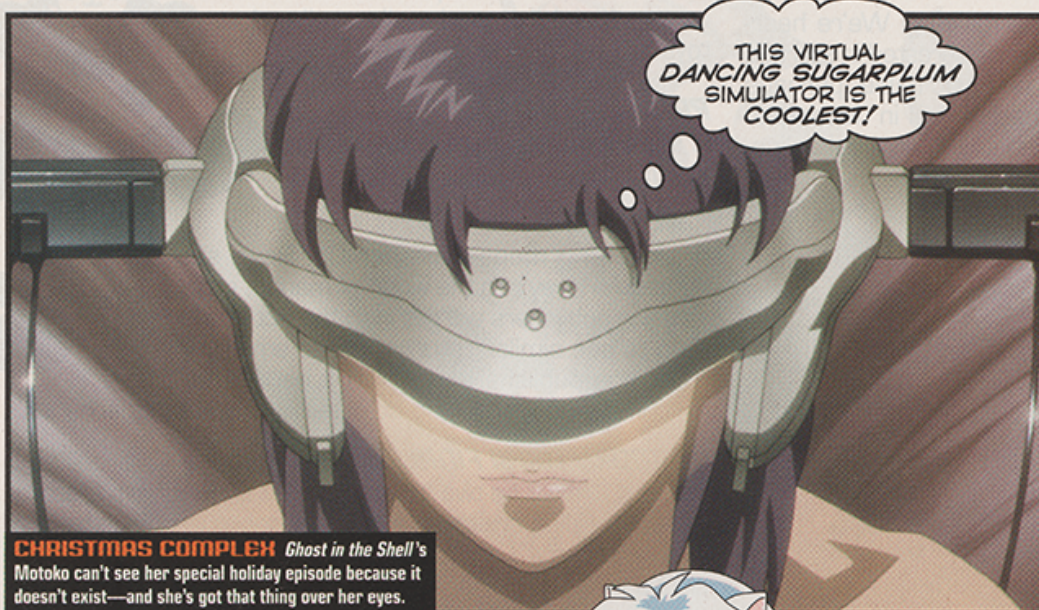
While New Year's is a Buddhist celebration, most winter festivals follow Shinto traditions and serve to honor (or request assistance from) the local region's gods. For example, the Kamakura festival held each February in Yokote City began as an appeal to the local water spirits for a good harvest. While residents are now more likely to pray for good grades or financial fortune, they still build small igloo-like snow shrines with altars to the local deities and in the evenings, children sit in them and offer passer-bys toasted rice cakes and amazake (rice wine.)

Probably the most well-known winter festival is the Yuki Matsuri (snow festival) held each February in the city of Sapporo. Started in 1950 as a series of snow sculptures made by local schools, the festival gained international exposure because of the 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympics. It now brings in international teams of snow sculptors who create towering sculptures like the Taj Mahal, the Parthenon and even anime characters like Doraemon!

■ **Jon Gutierrez**

HOLIDAY JEER

The anime Christmas episodes you'll never see!



CHRISTMAS COMPLEX *Ghost in the Shell's* Motoko can't see her special holiday episode because it doesn't exist—and she's got that thing over her eyes.

Many anime have a token Christmas episode, but the A.I. staff stumbled across secret scripts of unmade holidays episodes from today's big anime. Stuff your stocking with these might-have-beens!

GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX One snowy December night, a mysterious man shows up at Section 9 claiming that he is Santa Claus. After running his fingerprints for identity verification, Batou compares believing in Santa to the philosopher Plato's allegory of the cave. Motoko loans Santa twelve Tachikoma to help deliver presents but declines to accompany him, citing her responsibility to apprehend a criminal called "Christmas Past."

GUNDAM SEED Kira and Yzak conspire to lead the ZAFT and Earth Forces to a "battlefield" that turns out to be the location of a special Christmas dinner with all the children orphaned by the war. Everyone is surprised when "Santa" makes an appearance, but no one has the heart to tell Commander Le Creuset that his white-masked, eerily soft-spoken

INUYASHA

Santa and his Merry Elves! Hoisting a bizarre green and red flag with a bearded skull and crossed pine trees, these stunted pirates give away all of their booty, which suits the crew of the Merry Go just fine.

But in the wee hours of Christmas morning when Nami "overhears" that the Elves are on their way to find the One Piece—and give it to some children—Luffy fills their bow with cannon shot and leaves them floating in his wake.

REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA

On December 24, a new student arrives at Ohtori Academy. Nicholas is a dashing upperclassman who dresses only in red and white stripes, and carries with him a sack filled with mysteriously empty boxes, one of which he gives to every girl he meets. At sunrise on Christmas morning, Nicholas and the headmaster kiss and transform into toboggans and the students enjoy a day of sledding and hot cocoa.

WOLF'S RAIN A mysterious scent leads

Paradise-seeking Kiba and his three friends all the way to the North Pole, where they run right in to Santa's Workshop! Santa gives the wolves plenty of Milk Bones and a warm place to sleep, but Darcia's forces show up en masse and try to take the place down. Luckily, Santa and his elves prove to be a formidable fighting team, keeping Darcia's foot soldiers at bay while Kiba's pack escapes through the back door ■ **Zac Bertschy & Summer Mullins**



CRYSTAL BALL 2

Heed our wild hunches on what 2005 will bring for the world of anime!

CABLE READY

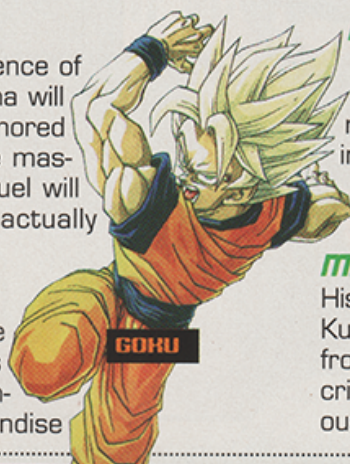
The Anime Network won't be alone for long! We're hearing a lot of buzz about other companies interested in starting their own 24-hour anime channel on basic cable, perhaps even an established 24-hour anime channel in Japanese. We're betting at least one more joins your local cable line-up before the end of 2005.

NEW YEAR'S BALL?

Based on *Dragon Ball Z*'s resurgence of popularity in Japan, Akira Toriyama will finally decide to make the long-rumored sequel titled *Dragon Ball AF*. The massive financial success of the sequel will lead to tragedy when Toriyama actually drowns in his money.

LICENSES TO THRILL

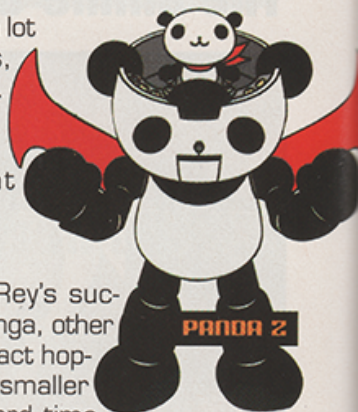
Now that anime soundtracks have been pretty firmly established as money makers, watch anime licensors start bringing more merchandise



over with the anime. Expect to see a lot more official licensed wall scrolls, toys and plushies from the big boys.

PANDA 2

It's coming. We feel confident about this.



BOOK 'EM

Following mega-publisher Del Rey's successful foray into the world of manga, other major publishers will get in to the act hoping to see similar returns. Some smaller manga publishers will have a hard time competing with these colossal corporate juggernauts.

MAMORU OSHII FINALLY SNAPS

His next film will be two hours of *Ghost in the Shell's* Motoko Kusanagi riding around in a Patlabor robot, reading straight from *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. Anime fans and film critics alike will celebrate the film, though it will have serious trouble breaking through to a wider audience. ■

IF IT WERE ANIME

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS

Good grief! Milquetoast Shaolin monk Chaali Bulownu's decidedly pathetic Kurisumasu celebration is interrupted by a swift snowball to the head from the playfully abusive and spiteful (yet secretly sensitive) catgirl Luusi-chan. Just as the enlightened Blanket Ninja Lainasu fends off swooning schoolgirl Saari-chan, the city comes under attack by the villainous rampaging mecha SNUUPI-Z, his explosive sidekick WOODO-SHUTAAKU and their dizzying associate Dust-Chan! It's up to keyboard-playing bishounen Shuloeda and Bulownu-san's one true love, Chibi Asa no Kami-chan, to save Christmas from SNUUPI-Z's robotic clutches, restore order to Bulownu-san's celebration and teach everyone about the evils of holiday commercialization! ■ ZB



LINEAGE II

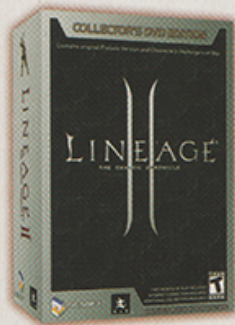
THE CHAOTIC CHRONICLE



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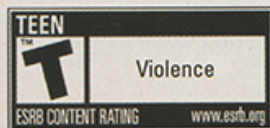
Lineage II: The Chaotic Chronicle is a massively multiplayer online PC game that features a large and intricately designed 3D universe, intense player-versus-player action, easy point-and-click interface and game controls, complex in-game societies and ongoing content updates.

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RECIPE FOR DISASTER

DARE YOU TRY FORMER 'A.I.' INTERN MIGUEL'S FAMOUS FRUITCAKE RECIPE? WE DON'T.

Christmas Cakes are essential to truly happy holidays in Japan, but all America has is the terrifying fruitcake. Still, our beloved ex-intern Miguel Esquivel is happy to share his recipe for traditional Otaku Fruitcake.

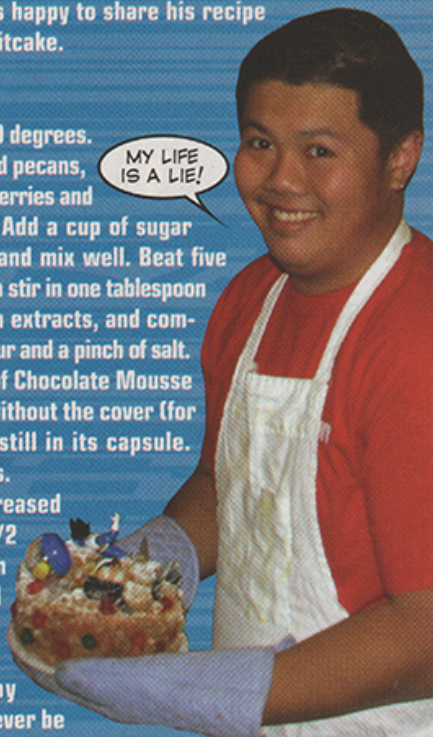
INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 250 degrees. Mix a cup each of chopped pecans, candied pineapples and cherries and orange peels in a bowl. Add a cup of sugar and one stick of butter, and mix well. Beat five eggs in, one at a time, then stir in one tablespoon each of vanilla and lemon extracts, and combine with 1 3/4 cups of flour and a pinch of salt.

Add a crumbled box of Chocolate Mousse Pocky, a manga volume without the cover (for fiber!) and a gashapon still in its capsule. Sprinkle with DVD shards.

Pour batter into a greased pan, and cook for 2 1/2 hours, or until golden brown. Cool on a rack and then dust it lightly with powdered sugar. This serves 12 but, like any fruitcake, should never, ever be eaten under any circumstances.

■ Miguel A. E. Esquivel



FRUITCAKE FIASCO Miguel wonders who thought this would taste good.

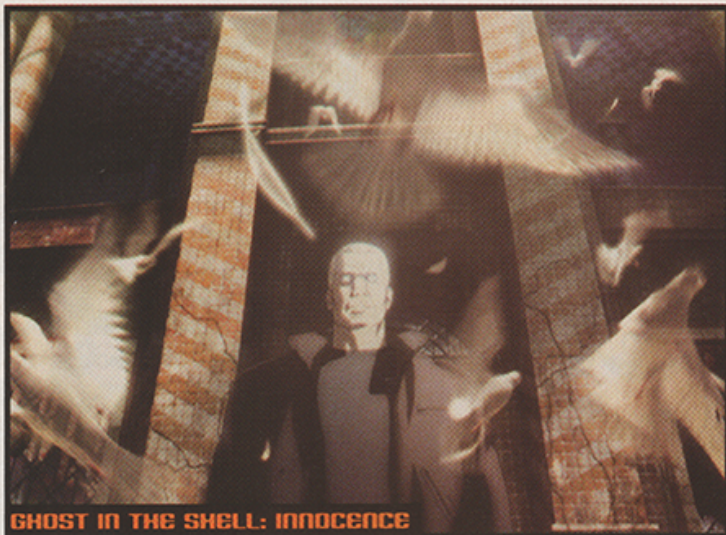
DEATH OF THE MONTH

KENNETH FROM 'CASE CLOSED'



Granted, there's at least one death in each episode of *Case Closed*, but the first episode certainly sets the bar for style. Kenneth stupidly gets on a roller coaster with his ex-girlfriend, a jilted gymnast named Hailey, who uses piano wire hidden inside a string of pearls to fashion

a noose. Looping this wire around a grappling hook and waiting until the coaster enters a tunnel, Hailey uses her gymnast skills to move undetected from the coaster's first row to slip the noose around Kenneth's neck in the third row, and then slings the hook around the coaster's railing. The coaster exits the tunnel minus one head. Luckily, teen detective Jimmy Kudo easily deduces who the culprit is. Still, when your mom says roller coasters are dangerous, you'd better listen. ■ RB



GHOST IN THE SHELL: INNOCENCE

INNOCENCE LOST

Deciphering some of the literary references of Oshii's 'Ghost in the Shell: Innocence'

You've seen Dreamworks' *Ghost in the Shell: Innocence* and your head is still spinning from all the crazy quotes cyber cop Batou and his pals utter. A.I. has the solution. With our Ph.D in Google-ology, we've done our best to help you decipher director Oshii's literary allusions.

THE QUOTE: "If our Gods and our hopes are nothing but scientific phenomena, then let us admit it must be said that our love is scientific as well." This quote appears before the movie even starts, as a title card.

WHERE IT'S FROM: Villiers de L'isle-Adam, *L'Eve future*

WHAT IT MEANS: "My name is Mamoru Oshii, and I am approximately twelve hundred thousand times smarter than you are."

THE QUOTE: "One need not be Caesar in order to understand Caesar," said by non-cybernetic policeman Togusa to chief Aramaki during a discussion about empathizing with cyborgs.

WHERE IT'S FROM: Max Webber, famous sociologist

WHAT IT MEANS: "Did you see that Will Smith movie, with the robots? You're Will Smith. Now get me some coffee."

THE QUOTE: "If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand," said by Batou when he and Togusa enter the huge electronic city Etolof, renowned for the countless criminal organizations there.

WHERE IT'S FROM: King James Bible, Psalm 139:18

WHAT IT MEANS: "This place has more crooks in it than a political fundraiser."

THE QUOTE: "They fell, thick as leaves...confounded chaos roared..." said as Togusa and Batou descend upon the purgatory-like city of Etolof

WHERE IT'S FROM: Milton, *Paradise Lost*

WHAT IT MEANS: The city of Etolof is a rust-ridden "Hell" that represents a rite of passage that Batou (like the guide Virgil from Dante's *Inferno*) and Togusa (representing the naive Dante from the same text) must overcome in order to truly personify the Hero archetype outlined in Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth*. Or, to put it more simply, "This place is a real dump." ■ ZB



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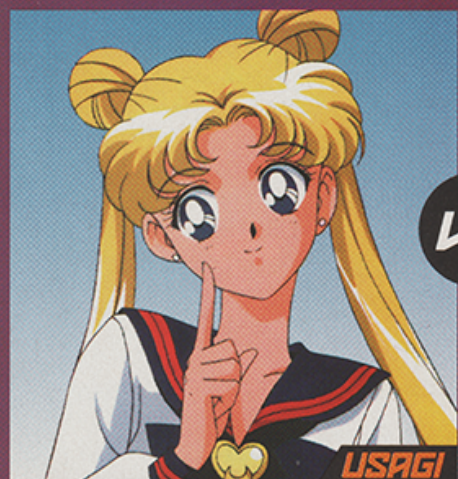


VS.

KAGOME



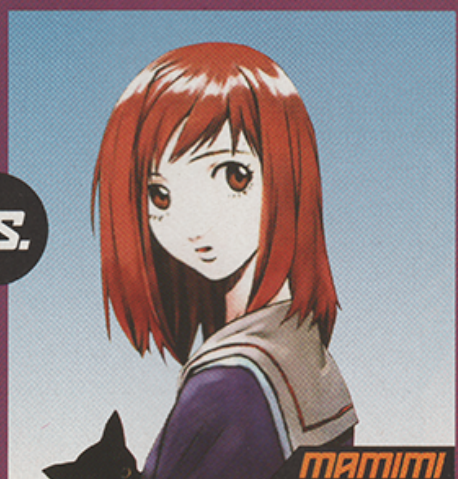
VS.

OSAKA**TOHRU**

VS.

USAGI

VS.

MIKA

MAMI



VS.

LAIN



VS.

CHISE**SHUICHI****VS.**

SAKURA



VS.

RAKKA

HITOMI

LAST MAN STANDING



A BATTLE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE

| NAME | SERIES | PERSONALITY | NAME | SERIES | PERSONALITY |
|--------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Kagome | <i>Inuyasha</i> | Peppy and slightly sassy | Lain | <i>Serial Experiment Lain</i> | Odd-mannered techno-naut |
| Osaka | <i>Azumanga Daioh</i> | Sweet but incredibly slow | Chise | <i>Saikano</i> | Soft-spoken and often confused |
| Tohru | <i>Fruits Basket</i> | Incredibly hardworking and perky | Shuichi | <i>Gravitation</i> | Loud but still sensitive |
| Usagi | <i>Sailor Moon</i> | Starry-eyed whiny crybaby | Sakura | <i>Cardcaptor Sakura</i> | Sweet and cheerful |
| Miaka | <i>Fushigi Yugi</i> | High-maintenance, always hungry | Rakka | <i>Haibane Renmei</i> | Demure and curious |
| Mamimi | <i>FLCL</i> | Aggressive and obsessive | Hitomi | <i>Escaflowne</i> | Thoughtful and determined |

THE BATTLE BEGINS

Bright lights flare to life above the center of a large arena where nine girls in school uniforms stand looking confused. The roar of an unseen crowd filters down as a shadowy figure approaches the group.

"Welcome to my little competition, girls." The girls gasp as the light reveals the curvy form of Queen Beryl, ruler of the Shadow World. "The rules are simple. Knock your opponent out of the ring, or beat them into unconsciousness. Now don't disappoint me!" She disappears, laughing wildly.

The audience cheers as a horn blast signals the start of the match. Kagome, used to unexpected battles, whips out her bow and arrow and fires upon Lain, a frail girl looking around frantically for her computer. The force of the purifying arrow slams Lain into Osaka, who was already distracted by something else, and the two girls go tumbling out of the ring.

Sakura, the youngest of the girls, pulls out a deck of cards. She mumbles an incantation under her breath and twirls several times before tossing a card in the air. Setting her sights on the grey-winged Rakka, Sakura strikes the card with her now-transformed key. "Illusion!"

Blinking, Rakka gazes upward as the crow from her dreams soars across the sky. "Wait!" Forgetting completely about the fight, Rakka chases after the bird.

Miaka, in a most un-priestess-like move, slams her fist into the innocent-looking Chise. Stunned, Chise's other side tries to come out, but a kick to the face by the Priestess of Suzaku sends The Ultimate Weapon flying out of bounds.

In another part of the ring, a pink-haired "girl" named Shuichi and Usagi, Sailor Moon's secret identity, start wailing loudly for their boyfriends to save them. The sheer intensity of their wailing causes Hitomi, unfortunate enough to be standing nearby, to pass out.

Tohru, who's used to a lot of noise and sudden fighting, takes the opportunity to try to pacify everyone. As she turns to speak to Shuichi, a bat goes whizzing past her and slams into Usagi, knocking her out cold.

Mamimi, the owner of the bat, murmurs "Ooooh!" and

swings wildly again. This only encourages Shuichi's fearful shrieking. Tohru dodges the swings and approaches Mamimi, trying to reason with her.

Meanwhile, with her first opponent defeated, Sakura turns towards Tohru and Mamimi and draws another card. "Sleep!" The card transforms into a little pixie that dumps a bucket full of dust upon the two girls, who yawn and slump to the ground in a deep slumber.

Miaka charges at Kagome but the other priestess dodges, instead blasting Miaka with a surge of spiritual energy. The Priestess of Suzaku flies backwards across the edge of the ring and lies twitching on the ground.

Seeing Sakura still distracted with her cards, Kagome fires off an arrow at the young Cardcaptor. Sensing danger, Sakura pulls another card from the deck. "Windy!" A beautiful woman flies out of the card straight at Kagome, blowing both her and the arrow out of bounds, leaving only Sakura and Shuichi.

A bead of sweat trickles down the side of Shuichi's face as he considers his options. Sakura's voice dies in her throat as Shuichi's skirt flies up as The Windy returns to her deck. Eyes wide and face beet red, Sakura faints in the middle of the ring.

THE WINNAH:

The referee jumps back into the ring and holds up Shuichi's hand. "The winner—Shu-chan!"

"Hey, that's not fair!" Osaka shouts as she jumps back into the ring.

"Yeah," chimes in Lain. "He's no girl!"

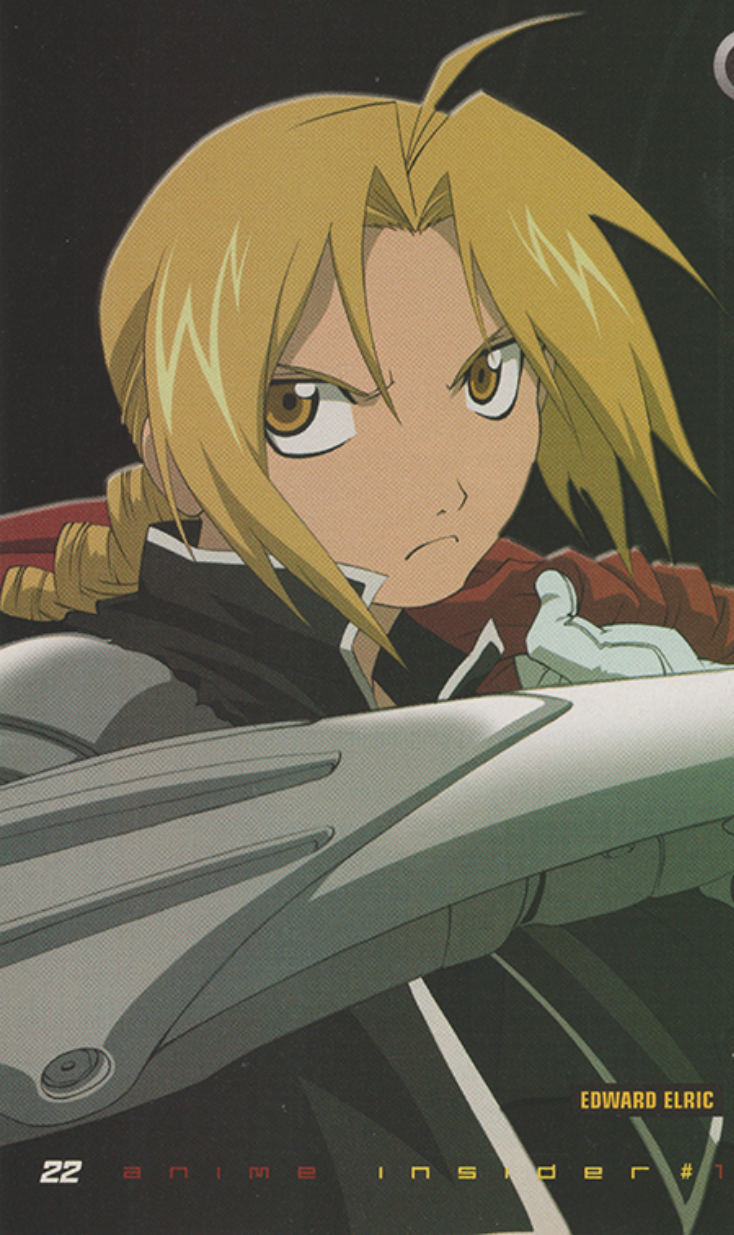
"Uh, is she supposed to do that?" Kagome points at the fully transformed, very angry-looking Chise who is hovering over the arena. The Ultimate Weapon glares at Shuichi and glows brightly for a moment before she activates in an explosion of light, enveloping the earth. When the light fades, no planet is to be found...nor any winners.

Have an idea for an anime brawl? Let us know at Animelnsider@aol.com!

BREAKING *the* LAW

The 'Fullmetal Alchemist' guide to working with alchemy

By Zac
Bertschy



EDWARD ELRIC

Alchemy is one seriously dangerous business. That's what we learned after watching a good bit of Cartoon Network's latest hit anime series, *Fullmetal Alchemist*. Well, after that and trying a number of transmutations out ourselves.

The loss of a few interns and the misadventures of Ed and Al Elric taught us many things about what you can and can't do when transmuting matter. The number one rule (and the rule most of the others are based on) that all aspiring alchemists must follow is the law of equivalent trade. That is, you can't make anything without sacrificing something of equal value; you can't add or subtract material, you can only transmute it into something else.

Since the laws are so sensitive—and dangerous if not followed to the letter—there's a right and a wrong way to go about being a successful alchemist. If you find yourself confused, don't worry—so were we at first! So that you can learn from our mistakes, we're offering you alchemist-wannabes your very own guide to the do's and don'ts of the alchemic arts. Just try to avoid blowing your limbs off.



DON'T USE ALCHEMY TO BRING PEOPLE BACK TO LIFE. IT NEVER EVER WORKS.

It didn't work for Doctor Frankenstein and chances are it isn't going to work for you either. Ed and Al learned this the hard way when they tried to bring their mother back to life; Ed lost a leg and Al lost his entire body. What they *did* manage to create wasn't even human, let alone their mother, so it really wasn't worth it. To make matters worse, they got blood everywhere, had to burn the house down and now suffer from crippling emotional instability. So don't do it.



DO PERFORM MINOR MIRACLES. JUST ABOUT ANYONE WILL BE IMPRESSED!

Wanna impress a girl or enlighten a village of easily-led rubes? Just do some simple alchemic tricks! Turn water into wine, fix a broken radio, resuscitate a dying bird, or even repair a damaged statue, and the people will be eating out of your hand. Ed and Al perform a few of these showstoppers for the oppressed people of Rioro (who are suitably awed) and instantly bring down the local tyrant, who had them convinced that simple alchemy was the work of God. Take THAT, organized religion!



DO HELP THE INNOCENT—IT CAN'T HURT!

Ed and Al visit the city of Xenotime just in time to see the local landlord wreck the town's only tavern since the salt-of-the-earth guys inside can't pay the bills. Ed's alchemy makes reconstruction a snap. And his reward? A whole pack of brand-new muscle-bound friends willing to help Ed out with any heavy lifting or "persuasion." Remember, the plebes probably can't use alchemy, so lending an alchemic hand helps both you AND them.



DON'T THINK FOR A SECOND ALCHEMY CAN SOLVE ALL YOUR PROBLEMS.

You can be the best alchemist this side of Ed's pop and still get stuck between a rock and a hard place every now and then. Even Ed himself has had to use wits and cunning rather than alchemic feats of strength to get himself out of a sticky situation, especially when running up against the military, whose sheer force easily matches his own. You can lose your limbs, just don't lose your wits. You'll need them all!

Associate Editor Zac Bertschy affixed his soul to a gym sock and has regretted it ever since.



DON'T TRY TO FUSE HUMANS AND ANIMALS USING ALCHEMY. IT'S JUST GROSS.

Early in his travels, Ed runs across Tucker Shou, a brilliant alchemist who's also a few cards short of a full deck. Tucker is famous for creating a "chimera," two animals fused together to create a new species. In a moment of insanity, Tucker tries to combine his cute little daughter with the family dog, and the end result is a grotesque mockery of humanity that winds up being blown apart right after being created. The bloody mess it left behind wasn't fun to clean up, either. Another bad idea.



DO FIND A SPECIALTY AND STICK TO IT.

Ask state alchemist Lt. Roy Mustang about this one. Especially skilled with fire alchemy, Roy's powerful explosions prove that he's got what it takes. Major Armstrong is the same way; he uses alchemic blasts (and bulging muscles) to power his already fearsome fists. These guys might not have a million tricks, but they've perfected a technique and people run in fear from it...so if you stink at everything else, being a one-trick pony ain't too shabby.



DON'T USE HUMANS AS A TEST SUBJECT.

This should go without saying, but using human beings as test subjects for unapproved alchemic experiments is wrong, wrong, wrong. Just take a look at what Ed and Al find inside the military's mysterious (and disgusting) Fifth Laboratory if you don't believe us. Heck, everyone in the world of *Fullmetal Alchemist* who uses humans for experimentation winds up with a face full of Autmail, so it's just not worth the risk. Besides, human beings are oozy and filled with all kinds of smelly organs, so even if the experiment is a success, you're still going to have to spend a week cleaning it all up.

BLOOD FROM A STONE

Squeezing the Truth out of the Philosopher's Stone

The show may be a fantasy, but the Philosopher's Stone sought by Ed and Al has its roots in real-life legend. The "real" Philosopher's Stone was said to have been created by Nicolas Flamel, a 14th century Frenchman who claimed to have learned how to make the stone from an ancient book called *The Book of Abraham the*

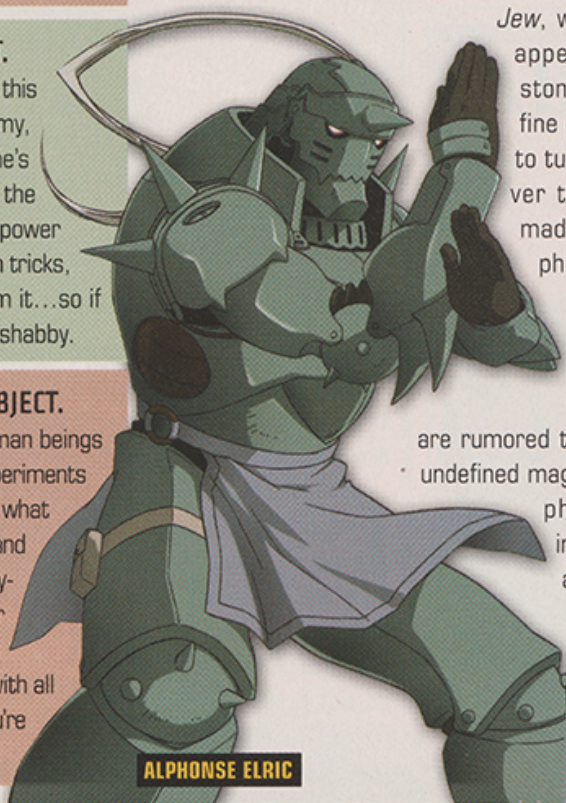


Jew, which dis-

appeared after his death. The stone (which was turned into a fine powder) was said to be able to turn mercury to silver and silver to gold, which legend says made Flamel a very wealthy and philanthropic man.

While no proof of the stone's existence can be found, Flamel and his wife, who were buried together in Paris,

are rumored to still be alive thanks to the undefined magic of the stone. The Philosopher's Stone has ignited imaginations across the globe, appearing most famously in the first book of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (which in England was known as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*). ■ **ZB**



ALPHONSE ELRIC



CLAMP OF APPROVAL

'ANIME INSIDER' DARES TO COMPARE ALL THE WORKS OF JAPAN'S
FOREMOST FEMALE-POWERED COMICS STUDIO

by Trisha L. Sebastian

Faster than a speeding battle doll! More powerful than a locomotive persocom! Able to leap over tall buildings with The Jump Clow Card! No, it's not some guy in red—it's four tiny, mega-

talented Japanese women. Their beginnings were humble enough—as members of a 12-woman doujinshi circle in 1990, Ageha Ohkawa, Mokona, Tsubaki Nekoi and Satsuki Igarashi started out drawing fan comics for anime like *Knights of the Zodiac*. The circle was pared down to four, who have stuck together to create a new art style and genre of comics, and become a part of the most successful and most widely read comics studio in Japan.

So how do they keep fresh? By working on at least two

series at a time, these ladies always keep their work in the public eye and in their fans' hearts. It's a shrewd move orchestrated by Ohkawa, the group's director, but it's definitely one that's paid off. Fifteen years later, CLAMP titles are loved by fans from all over the globe, regularly beating out the works of native creators and publishers in their own countries!

CLAMP's titles are so good every single one of them has been licensed for U.S. release (except the very newest, and it's only a matter of time). But how good are they when you match them against other great manga—namely the works of CLAMP? *Anime Insider* put the studio's comics on a 1-to-5 scale (of Rayearth's Mokonas, natch). The competition is fierce, but it's certainly easy on the eyes!



MAN OF MANY FACES

(1990-1991)

TOKYOPOP

Even though he has two (!) twin moms, fourth-grader Akira does all of the cooking and chores, and even steals whatever his mothers desire. But when Akira hides in precocious kindergartner Utako's room during a caper, it's his heart that is stolen. Many of the sophisticated views that later CLAMP characters have on relationships are presented here, which doesn't seem odd until you realize that they're being espoused by grade-school kids. The first of CLAMP's three series to take place at the CLAMP School, *Man of Many Faces* is best seen as a quaint reminder of the art team's professional serial debut in *Newtype Japan*.

RATING

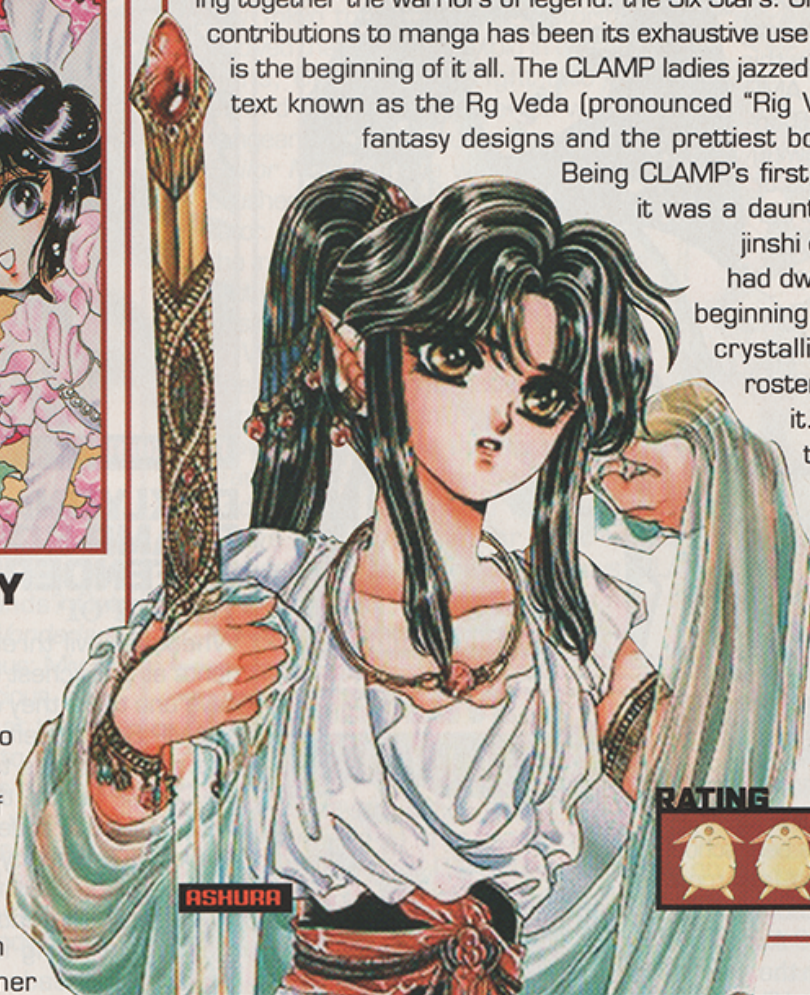


RG VEDA (1990-1996)

TOKYOPOP

An evil emperor's hold on a mystical land can only be thwarted by bringing together the warriors of legend: the Six Stars. One of CLAMP's biggest contributions to manga has been its exhaustive use of mysticism, and this is the beginning of it all. The CLAMP ladies jazzed up the religious Hindu text known as the Rg Veda (pronounced "Rig Vay-da") with beautiful fantasy designs and the prettiest boy in manga, Ashura.

Being CLAMP's first major, serious work, it was a daunting task for the doujinshi circle whose numbers had dwindled to seven at the beginning of *RG Veda* and then crystallized into the current roster of four by the end of it. It's not hard to see the reason the others dropped out. The characters in *RG Veda* are lushly designed, and the story is suitably epic and full of death, destruction and destiny—themes the four ladies would explore further in *X*.



ASHURA

RATING



TOKYO BABYLON

(1991-1994)

TOKYOPOP

In modern-day Tokyo, only the onmyoji (which means "shaman" or "medium") known as Subaru can protect the living from the angry spirits that haunt the city. Anticipating their long-running series *X*, the themes that would later grip that series of books and others were first tested out and tried here. More-than-platonic love between men? Check. Characters who are reluctant to embrace their destiny? Double-check. A fanatical devotion to fashion and the use of sakura (cherry blossoms) as an important symbol of life's brevity? Triple and quadruple-check. Don't be fooled by the fluff in the opening chapters. The series turns darker as it progresses, preparing readers for the bleak angst to follow in *X*. The dual themes of how tough it is to live in a big city like

RATING



Tokyo and the high price of naiveté give *Tokyo Babylon* a prominent place in the CLAMP compendium.

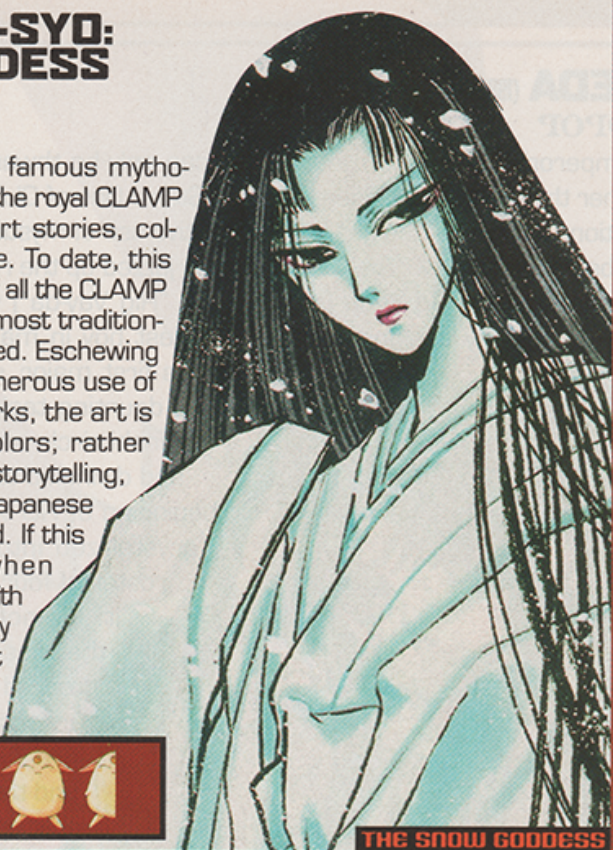


SHIRAHIME-SYO: SNOW GODDESS TALES (1992)

TOKYOPOP

One of Japan's most famous mythological figures is given the royal CLAMP treatment in five short stories, collected into one volume. To date, this is the most beautiful of all the CLAMP works as well as the most traditionally drawn and executed. Eschewing hard lines and the generous use of blacks of previous works, the art is done in soft watercolors; rather than linear Western storytelling, the traditional art of Japanese oral tradition is upheld. If this is what results when CLAMP experiments with its artistic medium, they should definitely do it more often!

RATING



THE SNOW GODDESS

CLAMP SCHOOL DETECTIVES

(1992-1993)

TOKYOPOP

Wouldn't it figure that the best school in Japan also has the best (and most handsome) private detectives protecting its student body? Akira from *Many Faces*, Suoh from the manga-novel *CLAMP Paranormal Detectives* and Nokoru from *Duklyon: CLAMP School Defenders* are the pre-teen hunks who start up a detective agency at the CLAMP School. A must for CLAMP fans, *Detectives* ends up as pure silliness—enjoyable but hardly ground-breaking.

RATING



TAKESHI AND KENTAROU

DUKLYON: CLAMP SCHOOL DEFENDERS (1992-1993)

TOKYOPOP

Whenever evil threatens, the students at the richest school in Japan have one team they can turn to: the CLAMP School Defenders. The second manga series to take place at the CLAMP School, the ladies skewer the sentai (color-coded heroes) genre as well as the buddy-movie genre all in one swoop. Funny but not quite gut-busting, the added irony of the main villain falling in love with the female team leader while her two teammates do not makes this stand out a bit more than other parodies.

RATING



X (1992-ongoing)

Viz

After witnessing a traumatic death, Kamui and his mother ran as far away from Tokyo as they could get. Six years later, he's drawn back by his desire to protect his friends and fulfill his destiny to save the world...or destroy it. The most depressing and death-ridden of the collective's titles to date, *X* has cemented its position as CLAMP's magnum opus. Readers have sweated through over a decade of character torture and repeated production hiatuses. It makes sense that both *CLAMP School Defenders* and *CLAMP School Detectives* came out the same year that *X* began. For both the audience and the artists, to be able to take a silly breather from this angst-filled, gory manga is a necessity. Still, *X* is so mesmerizing that the reader simply can't take a break. And by the time bad, bad things happen to your favorite character, the beautiful art and thrilling story will have won you over for good.



KAMUI

RATING





MIYUKI-CHAN IN WONDERLAND (1995) TOKYOPOP

Miyuki is an ordinary girl who likes videogames, TV and manga—so why does she keep getting pulled into imaginary, fantastic lands? Only seven chapters long, *Wonderland* can be summarized as thus: Miyuki's got a perverted subconscious. Reading the omake chapter at the end lends a lot of insight as to why this book was written: it was a chance for CLAMP to show the world that it could draw sexy females as well as sexy males. Judged on pure prettiness, *Miyuki* is a 4.5, but the naughty Alice parody bogs it down.

RATING



MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH (1994-1996) TOKYOPOP

In the magical land of Cephire, the Princess Emaraude has been kidnapped and it's up to three teens from modern-day Tokyo to rescue her. A story so involved that it had to be told in two sections, CLAMP dove right into the sword-and-sorcery genre with a vengeance. Coming out two years after *Sailor Moon*, there were many who brushed *Rayearth* aside as another imitator. But once the story moves past the initial setup you realize that there's a lot more going on leading up to the surprising mid-point climax.

With short and cheerful Hikaru as one of the lead characters, CLAMP perfected the "genki girl" archetype that would become the basis for the leads in *Card Captor Sakura*, *Suki* and *Angelic Layer*. And with designs that prove that the angular look works on teenage girls as well as willowy guys, CLAMP forged a winner out of what could have been a standard fantasy yarn.



THE ONE I LOVE (1995) TOKYOPOP

Love is a many-storied thing—and the ladies of CLAMP have a lot to say about it. By no means does this book contain the definitive CLAMP philosophy on love—that's better left to series like *Chobits* or *Wish* where the characters change and evolve over time. Rather, like *Shirahime-Syo*, *The One I Love* dips into and weaves in and out of the differing kinds of love, spanning the diverse experiences of its members, who contribute short essays after each chapter. A recommended read for romance fans.

RATING



THE CAT'S PAJAMAS This lovely lass is one of the many nameless heroines in *The One I Love*.

VITAL STATS

TINY TIDBITS ABOUT THE TOWERING MANGA TITANS

AGEHA OHKAWA

BORN: May 2, 1967 in Osaka, Japan
ROLE CALL: Director, writer, cover graphic designer, planning and sales
FUN FACT: CLAMP's rabbit who was born in the sign of the bull, Ohkawa counts thrillers like *The Cell* and *Silence of the Lambs* among her favorite movies.

MOKONA

BORN: June 16, 1968 in Kyoto, Japan
ROLE CALL: Lead penciler/inker, character designer, background artist, page layouts and composition (whew!)
FUN FACT: With as many hats as Mokona seems to wear in the CLAMP organization, it's no wonder she suffers from occasional shoulder and back problems.

TSUBAKI NEKOI

BORN: June 21, 1969 in Kyoto, Japan
ROLE CALL: Co-director, assistant penciler/inker, colorist
FUN FACT: Though she normally wears jeans, Neko has recently tried her hand at learning how to tie a kimono.

SATSUKI IGARASHI

BORN: February 8, 1969 in Shiga, Japan
ROLE CALL: Production coordinator, art assistant, Ohkawa's sounding board, magazine columnist...and part-time chef!
FUN FACT: A devout roller-coaster fan, Igarashi's made it a point of pride that she has never visited Tokyo Disneyland. Not once. ■ TLS

HIT THE FAN COMICS

THE SECRET TO CLAMP'S EARLY SUCCESS? DOUJINSHI!

So you wanna be great artists like CLAMP? All it takes is practice, practice, practice...and maybe a little "borrowing" someone else's characters! CLAMP got its start selling fan-made comics (a.k.a. doujinshi) at places like Comiket in Tokyo, Japan, where publishers first noticed the group's talent.

RONIN WARRIORS

Five kids from Earth are charged with Earth's protection—and CLAMP drew some of their off-camera exploits.



DEVILMAN

The story of a man who is transformed into a demon in order to save mankind gets the CLAMP touch.



SAINT SEIYA

Shun fights for the honor of the Saints—but more importantly, he looks hot while barely wearing his magical, cloth-like armor.



STAR WARS

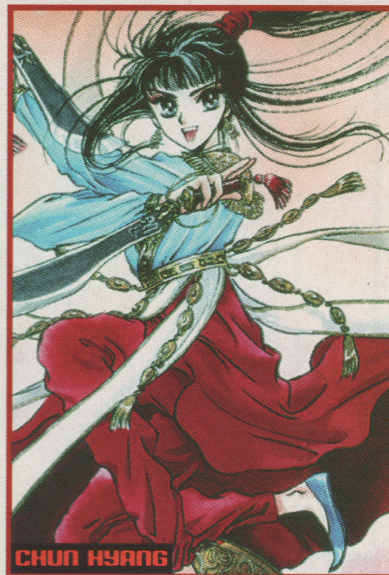
Doujinshi doesn't have to just be about anime, you know! Luke Skywalker fights alongside his green-haired(!) sister Leia against the evils of the Empire.



THE LEGEND OF CHUN HYANG (1996) TOKYOPOP

A warrior named Chun Hyang must protect her people from tyrannical governmental officials in ancient Korea. *Chun Hyang* has Ohkawa's mark all over it, from the historical background to the mythic quality of the tale. The story itself is very episodic and more slowly paced than its counterpart, *Rayearth*, which had just completed when *Chun Hyang* began. Artistically, there's a lot of interesting, finely brushed linework going on that anticipates the cleaner, less cluttered work of more recent CLAMP titles.

RATING



WISH (1996-1998) TOKYOPOP

When you already have everything and an angel grants you a wish, what do you choose? That's the question Shuichiro has to answer, and the results are more than he bargained for. Nekoi was the lead artist for this series, and her cutesy style fits in nicely in this tale of angels, demons, and the skeptical doctor in between. Celebrated by many for its angel designs, *Wish* takes the "man gets a wish from a god" formula pioneered by others and makes it their own, with feathers, feathers and more feathers.

RATING



SHUICHIRO AND KOMAKU

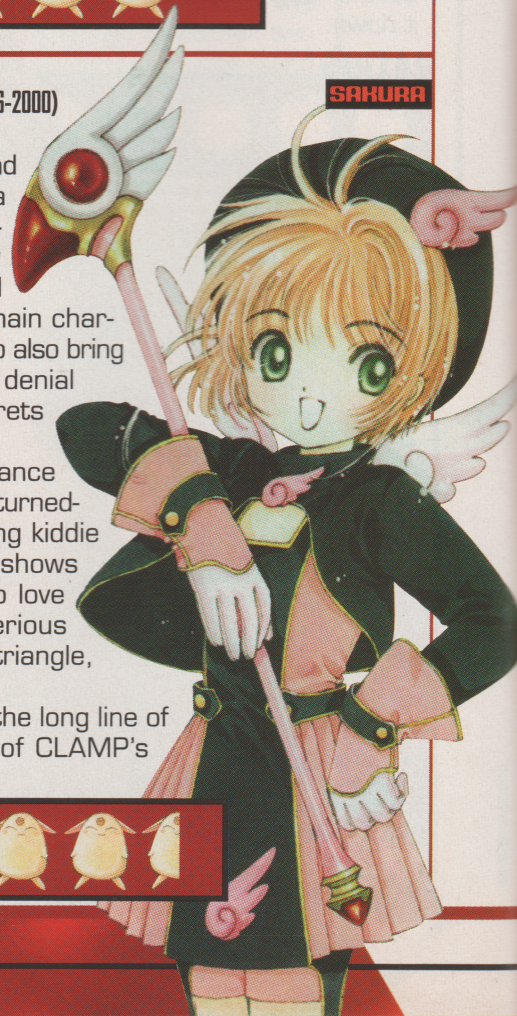
CARD CAPTOR SAKURA (1996-2000) TOKYOPOP

It started with the chance opening of a book—and turned into the epic adventure of Sakura Kinomoto's life. Continuing the "cute look" presented by *Wish*, CLAMP turns it up a notch by adding the allure of a collectible card game and an entire wardrobe of cute costumes for its main character. Sakura's brother Touya and his friend Yukito also bring the added allure of being the resident "boys in denial of their love" (or are they?) with their own secrets to reveal.

The main draw, though, is the budding romance between *Sakura* and her Clow Card competitor-turned-ally, Syaoran. *Sakura* contains a more satisfying kiddie romance than *Many Faces* because CLAMP shows the stages of reluctant friendship that lead to love rather than just jumping in. Later, the mysterious Eriol throws the cozy duo into a strained love triangle, amping up the romantic tension even higher.

At the same time, *Sakura* is another girl in the long line of CLAMP heroines, and the highest example of CLAMP's "short girls can do anything" motif. You might start to think someone was overcompensating for something...

RATING



SAKURA

Already smash hits worldwide,
now released for the first time in the U.S.
Traditional manga size and format,
the way the creators meant them to be.

swan



Masumi is a 16-year-old ballet student from a small dance school who dreams of becoming a beautiful prima ballerina. When she gains admission to a famous school, she feels she finally has the chance to realize her dreams. But can she endure the hardships, the struggles and the fierce competition in the world of ballet?

Rating: Everyone
October

coming soon! gals!



Kotobuki Ran is one of the toughest girls on the streets of Tokyo. Burdened by a family full of police officers who pressure her to follow in their footsteps, Ran has turned to a lifestyle of rebellion, vowing to stay tanned and bleached until her parents get off her case. Stubborn, sassy, and sometimes savage, Ran has already earned her rep as the "bull in Tokyo's china shop."

Rating: Teen
February

musashi #9



Secret organization "Ultimate Blue" is the last line of defense against worldwide terrorist and criminal organizations. Its top field operative: a 16-year-old known only as Number Nine. Created by top Japanese artist Takahashi Miyuki, **MUSASHI #9** is a hit action series famous for its lead character—the ultimate in cool.

Rating: Teen
October

coming soon! tenjho tenge



In one unusual Tokyo high school, classical education takes a backseat to brawling, as warring school clubs wreak havoc in the hallways and cause chaos in the classrooms, all in a bid to be the baddest team around! Only a handful of students stem the tide of violence in this untamed outpost. They are the few, the proud, the powerful—the members of the Juken Club.

Rating: Teen
February

Comic Shop Locator Service: 1-888 COMIC BOOK or
cmxmanga.com
CMX is a trademark of DC Comics.



CLOVER (1997) TOKYOPOP

With various groups seeking to exploit Sue's fantastic powers, it's all she and her protector Kazuhiko can do to stay one step ahead of them and reach Fairy Park. Of all the CLAMP titles, *Clover* is the most visually ambitious, and it succeeds on every level. White space is at a premium here, and the book itself reads like an art-house film. A mixture of science fiction themes as well as the ever-present love theme are woven into the story of one girl's loneliness—making this a welcome break from the cute magic in *Sakura* or *Wish* and a great transition between the nihilism of *X* and the surprisingly deep ruminations of *Chobits*.

RATING



ANGELIC LAYER (1999-2001) TOKYOPOP

Everyone in Tokyo knows that the best game to play is *Angelic Layer*—except newly arrived Misaki. However, a chance encounter leads her to this new game, new friends, and a desire to become the best player in the world.

It was a surprise to many fans that CLAMP would stray again into the toy tie-in pool, but CLAMP quickly won those detractors back with the strength of *Angelic Layer*: engaging female characters and the standard themes of friendship and trial through adversity. However, too much SD style and cartoonish elements keep *Angelic Layer* like a marketing ploy.



HIKARU & MISAKI

RATING



SUKI (1999-2000) TOKYOPOP

Naive Hina has a crush on her older next-door neighbor—who turns out to be the new teacher at her high school! And the fact that he seems to enjoy spending time with her has their all-girls school aflutter. Of course, being a CLAMP title, there's a mystery surrounding why Hina lives alone and why Shiro chose to live next door to her, as well as some deep thoughts on the nature of love. This series has a decade's worth of art experience on *Man of Many Faces*—it shows in the cleaner lines—and the philosophy's more complete as well.

HINA



RATING



AS FOR THE ANIME...

A QUICK LOOK AT THE BEST-KNOWN CLAMP ANIME SERIES

Proving that there's no such thing as too much of a good thing, CLAMP drove its fans to a fever pitch when some of its best-known manga series became anime series!

TOKYO BABYLON (1992)

Time hasn't been kind to this classic OVA series, but the mostly standalone episodes hold their own against other anime from the '90s. Still, when you add in the "prequel to *X*" factor, the show becomes a lot more interesting. **Rating: 3** (Central Park Media)

MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH (1994)

If you want the quick version of the *Rayearth* story, by all means watch the OVA. But the real meat is in the TV series, where you're introduced to main characters Hikaru, Umi and Fuu...and then you get to watch them get broken down emotionally. **Rating: OVA 3, TV 4** (Manga Entertainment, Media Blasters)



UMI

CARD-CAPTOR SAKURA (1998)

Run, don't walk, to get the complete, uncut version of this show. It's better than *Yu-Gi-Oh!* because the battles are short and non-repetitive, plus it has a more engaging storyline. Card-based anime has never looked this good since. **Rating: 4.5** (Geneon)

X (2001)

They said it couldn't be done, mostly because the manga was nowhere near a conclusion. But oh, the angst! This is the anime for goths,

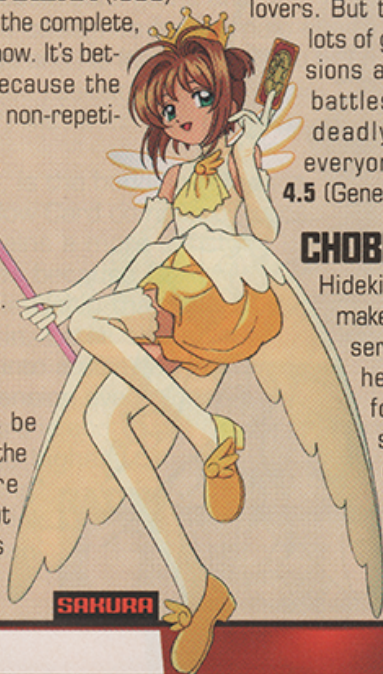
emo kids and bishonen-lovers. But there's also lots of great explosions and psychic battles, too. It's deadly fun for everyone! **Rating: 4.5** (Geneon)



KAMUI

CHOBITS (2002)

Hideki's ineptness with computers makes up the majority of this anime series, downplaying some really heavy science fiction themes found in the original manga series. Still, there are plenty of tender moments, and the episode with Chi walking around chanting "Panties!" never fails to amuse. **Rating: 4** (Geneon) ■ TLS



SAKURA

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FLIRTY FIFTEEN

CLAMP'S NOT SHY ABOUT GIVING OUT THE GOODIES FOR ITS ANNIVERSARY

It may be the Year of the Rooster in Chinese astrology, but 2005 really promises to be the year of CLAMP. The group's hit 15, but it's the fans who'll be getting the presents.



CLAMP NORTHSIDE

ART APPRECIATION

TOKYOPOP kicks off the festivities with the release of two art books spanning the creators' 15 years of publication. *CLAMP Northside* and *CLAMP Southside* come out January 2005, containing original artwork not published with other CLAMP titles, a how-to section, and bonus omake material. The gang at TOKYOPOP is so serious about the art books that in order to preserve their integrity, the books will be printed in Japan, using the very same inks that were used in the original Japanese language publications!

MAN OF MANY FACES



CLAMP-MATE

Hot on the heels of September's release of *CLAMP no Kiseki* (which translates as "CLAMP's Miracle") in Japan, TOKYOPOP will be translating and releasing the anthology volumes in the States as *CLAMP no Kiseki: The Ultimate Collection*. Each 32-page volume will be released on a bimonthly schedule starting in spring 2005 and will be jam-packed with artwork, never-before-seen interviews and other exclusive material. And if that

wasn't enough, each limited edition volume will be packaged with three chess pieces representing the most famous characters detailed in each volume. This means that lucky (and wealthy) collectors who buy

all 12 volumes over two years will have their very own CLAMP chess set!



CLAMP CHESS PIECES

MOVIE-A-HOLIC

Editor and columnist for CLAMP's Japanese website Hideki Yamanouchi confirmed in June that an XXXHOLiC theatrical movie will be coming out in 2005. No further details have been announced regarding the production. ■ TLS

CHOBITS (2001-2002) TOKYOPOP

In a world where personal computers (now known as "persocoms") are designed to look and feel like humans, Hideki gets more than he bargained for when he encounters the mysterious Chi, a persocom he finds in the trash. Not your typical love story, *Chobits* delves into themes typical of the science fiction genre, including what it means to be human and the nature of human emotions when applied to machines. CLAMP treads the lines between romantic comedy and science fiction easily, but due to the nature of the themes, the resolution and the plot twists become rather predictable. On the plus side, CLAMP's art style started to change when Igarashi took over the designs, and the result was a less angular, simpler form and figure, leading many to speculate that the design change was done on purpose to make the characters easier to animate. And there's enough fan service and frilly dresses to keep both male and female readers happy!



CHI

RATING



LEGAL DRUG (2001-ongoing) TOKYOPOP

Teens Kazahaya and Rikuo may look like ordinary pharmacy clerks, but it's the boys' phenomenal powers that really earn their keep. Continuing the clean style of *Suki* and even borrowing a character from it, *Legal Drug* moves the focus away from cute girly computers and squarely back into the realm of mysterious, beautiful men with secrets to hide. The series, which follows the efforts of the pair as they assist people who can't be helped by a simple prescription, is episodic in nature so it takes a while for the story to gain steam, but it's definitely worth the wait. There's also just enough shonen-ai to keep the squealing



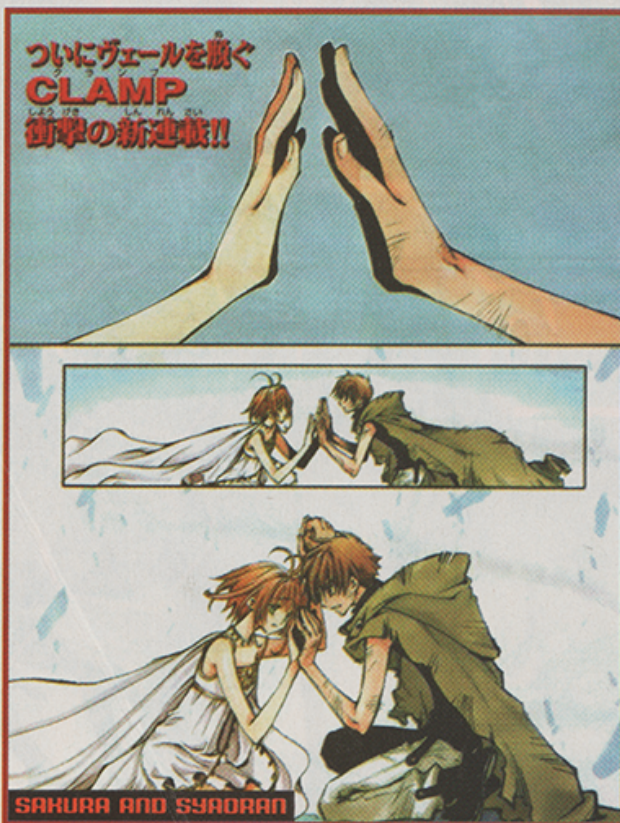
HAZAHAYA

fangirls happy, but thankfully underneath that is a deeper substance.

RATING



ついにヴァールを癒す
CLAMP
衝撃の新連載!!



SAKURA AND SYAORAN

TSUBASA: RESERVOIR CHRONICLE (2003-ongoing)

Del Rey

Welcome to the Clow kingdom, where Princess Sakura loves archaeologist Syaoran...but their teenage romance is torn asunder when the awakening of her dormant powers scatters her existence to the corners of the multiverse.

That description should be enough to tell you that this isn't your kid sister's *Card Captor Sakura*. To start off the latest of CLAMP's crossover books, the ladies pulled the main characters from *Sakura*, turned them older, moved them past the "do they or don't they?" stage of romance and thrust them into a heart-wrenching world-hopping adventure, rife with countless cameos pulled wholesale from the entirety of CLAMP's published works.

The danger of dipping into its own well of established and beloved characters is that without some real substance beyond the novelty of seeing classic characters retooled and revisited, *Tsubasa* could have been no better than a fanfic story pulled off the Internet. Luckily, CLAMP's years of experience with doujinshi, the depth of the new characterization, years and years of goodwill from a legion of loyal fans and Igarashi's amazing and ever-evolving line art prevent that from happening.

RATING



XXXHOLIC (2003-ongoing)

Del Rey

Hounded by spirits everywhere he goes, Watanuki is drawn to a house owned by a spiritualist named Yuuko who says that she'll be able to exorcise the spirits who haunt him...for a price.

Such is the premise behind the second of the recent CLAMP crossover books. Taking those chapters in *Tsubasa* aside, the plot consists of short stories that are linked by one major detail: all of the characters whose wishes Yuuko is contracted to fulfill are addicts (hence the title).

The appeal of *XXXHOLIC* is its design, which is a mix of CLAMP's classic elongated look, perfected in *X*, and the simple lines of the group's recent work. However, the art is never so simplistic that it skimps on the fantastic, especially in regards to the designs of Yuuko's outfits. With the series ongoing and the announcement of a theatrical anime in Japan (see sidebar), *XXXHOLIC* has the potential to become CLAMP's new flagship series.

RATING



SWEET VALERIAN (2004-ongoing)

Unlicensed

Kanoko, Pop and Kate started out the day by going to get their moped licenses—and ended up being recruited into a secret society that fights stress! Oh, and they turn into rabbits, too. Described by many as CLAMP meets Junko Mizuno by way of *The Super-Milk Chan Show*, it's too early to tell exactly how *Sweet Valerian* will stand up against CLAMP's other works. Still—it's fun enough we'll give it the benefit of the doubt for now. Interestingly, "valerian" is the name of a medicinal root that (wouldn't you guess it) promotes relaxation!

RATING



KANOKO, POP AND KATE

Freelance writer Trisha L. Sebastian enjoys a relaxing cup of valerian tea after a stressful day of reenacting the epic battles of X using Kubrick toys and ketchup.



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DISC DRIVE

THE 50 ESSENTIAL ANIME DVD SERIES YOU GOTTA OWN

By the A.I. Staff

How do you measure a true otaku?

Is it by their ability to quote obscure titles or facts? Maybe it's the crazy amount of toys they own. Perhaps it's simply their empty bank account. Nope, it's none of those. To test the mettle of a true otaku, just take a look at their anime collection. Stack the DVDs one on top of another and the corresponding height is a perfect representation of their anime fandom. Yes, DVDs are the lifeblood of the anime industry. Theatrical releases might come and go, and TV viewings are fleeting, but that shiny Digital Video Disc is forever. Heck, anime fans actually ran from VHS to embrace DVD sooner than anyone else, and there's been no looking back since. Stores are full to bursting with anime titles—some good, some bad. So how can you know what DVDs are worthy of your precious money?

Anime Insider's here to help. We've sat through countless meetings and watched way too much anime all in the hopes of unearthing the 50 greatest anime DVD series of all time. It wasn't easy. Arguments were had. Things were thrown. Feelings were hurt. So were the interns. But in the end, we got all 50 of 'em, so that you can get them too.

These DVDs are necessities for anyone who wants to call themselves an otaku—judged not just on the quality of the anime, but also the DVD itself, its extra features, the whole deal. We're not just talking about individual discs, mind you—sometimes whole series have been included. We've tried to be mindful of your money; when a series had more than 26 episodes we tried to judge it by best season or story arc so you'd be assured of only getting the anime essentials.

So if these discs aren't in your anime library already, get moving. You've got a lot of couch time to catch up on.

50 HAIBANE RENMEI (Geneon)

Imagine awakening from a dream only to find yourself in a strange new world, as a creature of pure fantasy, and without any memories of your life. Coat it in pastel earth tones, and you know you're staring at another masterpiece by the brains behind the moody, enigmatic *Serial Experiments Lain*, yoshitoshi ABe. When a young girl named Rakka is "born" into the world of the Haibane, she takes the audience on a ride to figure out just what the Haibane are. Working in a community that's been blocked from the outside world by a wall for countless years, they live as an accursed race, not knowing how or why they were sent there. Besides the 13 episodes, this set's packed with extras like mini pencil boards and creator interviews.



49 EXCEL SAGA IMPERFECT COLLECTION (ADV Films)

If laughter's truly the best medicine, then owning *Excel Saga* means you'll never visit the doctor again. The (Im)perfect Collection, which encompasses all 26 episodes of the series, is the parody anime to end all parodies. Nothing is sacred in the hands of original *Excel Saga* creator Koshi Rikdo and director Shinichi Watanabe, who poke fun at everything from magical girl shows to giant robots. The poster child for Jolt Cola, Excel is a hyperactive girl who can't manage to stay alive for an entire episode. Along with the sickly Hyatt, the duo will do anything to take over the world for Lord Ilpalazzo. And 100 Japanese in-jokes a minute means that ADV's Vid-notes—pop ups that can be turned on to give behind-the-scenes info—are a great bonus.

EXCELLENT *Excel Saga's* maddening motor-mouthed vixen has caused more otaku brain aneurisms than any other character.



48 GRAVITATION (Right Stuf)

19-year-old Shuuichi has always dreamed of being a famous pop star, and his band Bad Luck is headed straight for the top. But when his song lyrics are insulted by a passing stranger (who turns out to be a best-selling novelist), confusing feelings pull him off course. Can he still become the biggest pop star in Japan? The *shonen ai* or "boy's love" genre has always been popular in Japan, but *Gravitation* broke the ground in openly discussing boys who like boys. Even if you've never even considered watching *shonen ai*, you'll probably love this 13-episode show, if not just for the professionally produced pop and electronic music. Half-drama and half-comedy, *Gravitation* is energetic fun and soap opera plot twists all crammed into one pink-haired guy wearing a puppy costume.



47 LOVE HINA CHRISTMAS SPECIAL (Bandai)

Love Hina's known for fanservice, but this *Christmas Special* puts it on the back burner to focus on the romance between goodhearted Keitaro and the lovely but violent Naru. The holly and ribbons have been hung at Hinata Inn dormitory/bathhouse and the six girls are prepping for the holiday festivities and making manager Keitaro's life a merry hell. Rumor has it that if you confess to your loved one on Christmas Eve, all your wishes will come true. After a series of tragic misunderstandings, will Naru and Keitaro finally admit their true feelings to one another? Will the other crazy Hinata housemates interfere? You'll find the sweet answer—and a bonus episode 25 of the fan-favorite TV series—on this *Love*-ly disc.



46 SAIKANO (Viz)

Before you sit down to watch this 13-episode series, grab a box of tissues and keep all sharp objects out of the room. One of the most depressing anime series ever, *Saikano* tells the tale of Shuuji and Chise, a normal high school couple trapped in a country ripped apart by a horrifying war. When Chise is whisked away by the military and modified to be their Ultimate Weapon, this tragic romance suddenly transforms into a journey of what it means to be human, and whether love can exist when everything else is torn to shreds. A full disc of extras packaged with the first volume includes inter-



views, a TV special, animated shorts, a talk show featuring the voice actors and more.

45 PROJECT A-KO SPECIAL EDITION (Central Park Media)

Before *Excel*, before *Dokkoida*, there was A-ko—a spunky, slightly rowdy schoolgirl who made merciless fun of anime conventions. A-ko has super strength and speed. She also has a groupie in the incredibly bratty, whiny, cries-like-a-monsoon C-ko. Rich lunatic B-ko wants to steal C-ko for emphatically vague reasons, and designs ludicrous mecha to beat A-ko. Add in an alien invasion, a transsexual Captain Herlock, *Fist of the North Star*'s Ken if he were a schoolgirl and even Superman—and you have a hint of A-ko. CPM's Special Edition rules with original trailers from the '80s, a behind-the-scenes from Japan, and an interview with legendary writer/designer Yuji Moriyama. A-ko is a classic that hasn't aged a bit.



44 FUSHIGI YÜGI SUZAKU BOX SET (Geneon)

The story of sweets-loving schoolgirl Miaka and her adventures with the seven warriors of Suzaku is classic *shojo* storytelling at its most enjoyable, especially during its first season. When Miaka and her friend Yui find a mysterious book called *The Universe of the Four Gods* in the library, Miaka is transported to a magical land where she must summon the god Suzaku to save a

kingdom from evil. *Fushigi Yûgi* is a cult classic filled with sorcery, tangled relationships...and, er, cross-dressing! Even the seasoned fan will enjoy the bevy of extras that come with this 26-episode set, like interviews with creator Yuu Watase and a well-organized relationship chart keyed to specific scenes, all packaged in a sleek, fiery case that will look gorgeous on your shelf.



COMIN' HOME *Fushigi Yûgi*'s Tamahome packs a mean punch and makes the ladies swoon, even in frilly clothing.

43 MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: CHAR'S COUNTERATTACK (Bandai)

Thirteen years after the original *Mobile Suit Gundam*'s events, Char Aznable's returned with a new Neo Zeon army. Hoping to end man's destructive ways, Char intends to crash asteroids into the planet and create a nuclear winter, thereby forcing mankind into space and ushering in a new age. Makes sense, right? Unfortunately, only Noa Bright and Amuro Ray remain from *MS Gundam* to stop him. Thankfully, they're armed with the state-of-the-art Nu Gundam mobile suit!

In many ways the culmination of the *MS Gundam* epic, the *Char's Counterattack* movie brings the entire saga full circle. The DVD is complete with extra footage and a booklet containing universe maps, a Universal Century timeline and an encyclopedia included in a beautiful slipcover case.



BEST DVD FEATURE

ADV VID-NOTES

Remember when VH1 did those awesome pop-up videos? So did ADV—in its releases of 2002's *Excel Saga* and 2003's *Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi*, ADV Films threw in a feature called ADV Vid-notes, where comments popped up during the episodes with behind-the-scenes information, explanations of puns and in-jokes, and translation notes. It's the perfect way to explain this stuff!



42 SAIYUKI SEASON 2 (ADV Films)

The legend of the Monkey King gets a radical facelift in this fast-paced take on "Journey to the West," a folk tale as popular in the East as the story of Cinderella is in the West. Countless versions have covered the journey of Buddhist priest Sanzo, Goku the Monkey King, and their two demon cohorts to retrieve a holy scroll from India, but this version gives Sanzo cigarettes and plenty of guns, and makes Goku and the other demons as deep as they are good-looking.

The story—full of the four's demon-infested adventures as they work their way west—settles into its real and best groove in the 24-episode adventures of season two, adding a lot of heart and angst to the bullet-riddled action.



41 CARDCAPTOR SAKURA THE MOVIE 2: THE SEALED CARD (Geneon)

We've been suckered into enough games of 52-card-pickup to know that Sakura Kinomoto doesn't have it easy recollecting all the Clow Cards and converting them into Sakura Cards. Based on one of CLAMP's most popular manga series, the TV series left viewers with a rather unsatisfactory ending to Sakura and Syaoran Li's relationship. The movie, however, picks up where the TV series left off and focuses on these two children as they battle a terribly powerful foe and finally admit their love for each other. As we await Sakura's answer when Syaoran tells her how he feels, the mystery of the 53rd Clow Card is uncovered. Buyers can also capture a miniature pencil board and "Tomoyo's Photo Album" with this DVD.



40 INUYASHA VOL. 12 (Viz)

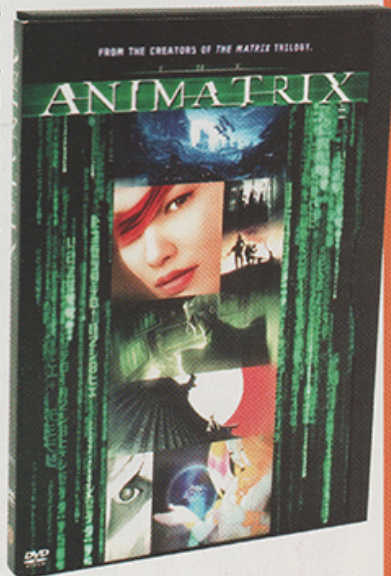
One of the most popular anime series on Cartoon Network, *Inuyasha* focuses on the series' hot-tempered half-demon namesake as he journeys with Kagome, Miroku, Sango, and Shippo to recover the scattered Sacred Jewel fragments. Our heroes come in contact with Inuyasha's full-demon brother Sesshomaru on numerous occasions, which always results in a devastating family feud...but never in a fight like the one on this DVD! This volume (collecting episodes 34-36), stands above the rest for one reason: Inuyasha's fearsome new ultimate technique aids him in a long-burning battle with his all-powerful (and totally evil) bis-honen brother, whose own super-powered sword is brought in to spice up the action. It's the ultimate fight between the show's two biggest badasses, and they're in prime fighting shape; who can resist?



39 THE ANIMATRIX (Warner Bros.)

Ever the spirited film pioneers, *The Matrix* creators the Wachowski brothers gathered together some of the top directors and studios in anime—like Mahiro Maeda (*Blue Submarine #6*) and Shinichiro Watanabe (*Cowboy Bebop*)—to create a series of anime shorts that expand on the *Matrix* universe...and boy, did these guys deliver! You'll see amazing new moments with Trinity and Neo, explore the cataclysmic events that lead to the machines conquering Earth, and thrill to some of the finest animation ever put to film.

Besides nine short features, the DVD includes a truckload of special features including commentaries from three of the directors, making-of videos for all of the stories and the newbie documentary "Scrolls to Screen: The History and Culture of Anime."



38 GREAT TEACHER ONIZUKA BOX SET 1 (TOKYOPOP)



Even the world's most horrific, violent, out-of-control students are powerless before the might of Eikichi Onizuka. So how does the self-proclaimed Great Teacher Onizuka do it? Well, it certainly doesn't hurt that he's the ex-leader of a motorcycle gang. After being hired as a high school student teacher, the eager educator's rather unconventional teaching habits quickly come into question. Show major disrespect in class? No problem. Great Teacher Onizuka just hangs the students upside down over the side of a building, or nearly drowns them in a fountain.

Will GTO be able to turn a group of mistrusting misfit students back on the right track before he's given the boot himself? Complete with a free t-shirt, this 23-episode set is a necessary part of an anime fan's education.

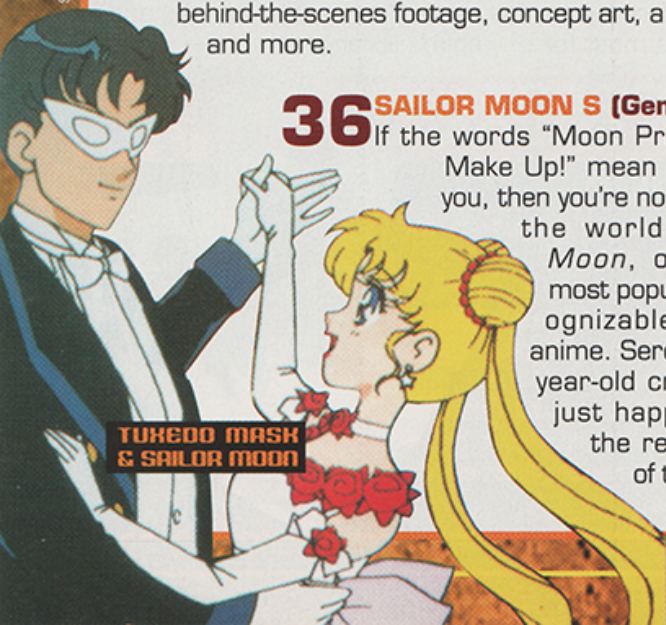
37 HEAT GUY J (Geneon)

In an exceedingly normal futuristic city, special forces officer Daisuke Aurora battles the mob with J, a huge, fedora-wearing, philosophizing, mutton-chopped partner who happens to be the only android allowed in town. This is a massively entertaining crime drama, complete with killer robots, psycho mob bosses, wolf-headed criminals with swords and one of the best dubs (in both voices and script) around. This anime is so refreshingly unpretentious; instead of shoving some half-baked comment on modern existence at you, *Heat Guy J* concentrates on telling a great, entertaining story, and succeeds on every level. Pony up for the full 26-episode series (in two box sets) and you get a specific extras DVD with tons of behind-the-scenes footage, concept art, a music video and more.

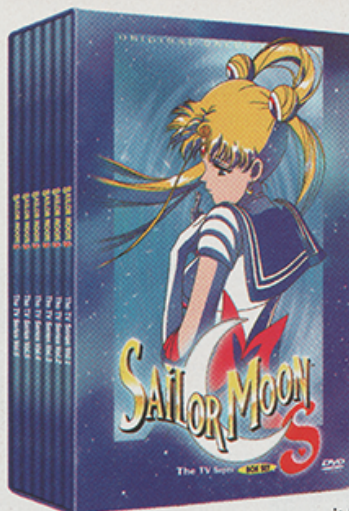


36 SAILOR MOON S (Geneon)

If the words "Moon Prism Power, Make Up!" mean anything to you, then you're no stranger to the world of *Sailor Moon*, one of the most popular and recognizable series in anime. Serena is a 14-year-old crybaby who just happens to be the reincarnation of the Princess



TUXEDO MASK & SAILOR MOON



of the Moon. Together with a group of Sailor Scouts that fills out over several series, she battles aliens intent on controlling the universe.

In *Sailor Moon S*, the third season, all nine of the Sailor Scouts are finally united. Serena's often-annoying character starts to mature as she and the other scouts prepare to enter high school. Indeed, these 38 episodes move all the Sailor Scouts into more serious territory, while keeping track

with its target audience—making it the most engaging part of the *Sailor Moon* saga.

35 DRAGON BALL Z: PERFECT CELL SAGA (FUNimation)

This epic saga, often acknowledged as the best fighting anime ever, is too important to miss out on—and frankly, is just too darn good—and most Z-fans would consider the *Cell Saga* to be *DBZ's* peak. Two cruel androids run amok across Earth, but get absorbed by an even more powerful android, Cell. After trouncing the Z Warriors, Cell decides to hold his own martial arts tournament—and the only way to prevent him from destroying the Earth is to beat him. Even Goku himself says he can't beat Cell—but he goes to fight with a smile on his face. This epic battle fills 55 episodes, where you can choose between dubbed dialogue or subtitles with the original Japanese dialogue.



BEST COMMENTARY TRACK

FLCL

Wouldn't it be a great idea if *FLCL's* director Kazuya Tsurumaki could explain all the stuff that was going through his head when he made *FLCL*? Synch-Point thought so too, so they threw a director's commentary track onto every episode, revealing the incredible secrets of studio Gainax!



I haven't seen these sorts of backgrounds elsewhere.

34 GHOST IN THE SHELL (Manga Entertainment)

In a future where scientists have identified the soul and hackers can enter your brain and rewrite your memories, what does it mean to be human? Major Motoko Kusanagi becomes the focus of this question during her hunt to capture a mysterious criminal known as the Puppet Master.

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"Best Theatrical Feature Film" & "Best Director Of A Theatrical Feature Film"
MAMORU OSHII'S ANIMATED THRILLER

GHOST IN THE SHELL



The legendary Mamoru Oshii's movie adaptation of the equally legendary Masamune Shirow's cyberpunk manga was one of the first works to seamlessly integrate CG and traditional cel animation. The result was a gorgeous, atmosphere-heavy film that influenced many later movies (even *The Matrix*). *GitS* was the first Japanese movie to reach #1 on the Billboard video sales charts, and this release is packed with extras like a

making-of documentary and an extra focusing on the *GitS* manga, making it a perfect addition to your library.

33 AZUMANGA DAIOH (ADV Films)

If high school were this much fun, no one'd ever want to graduate. With the tall and kind-hearted Sakaki, rambunctious (and entirely annoying) Tomo, brainless and spacey Osaka, practical Yomi, sports nut Kagura, and a 10-year old genius named Chiyo, this group

of friends shows that four years of high school is for more than just learning—it's for curing hiccups with violence, failing tests with friends, trying to pet psychotic cats and creating memories for a lifetime.

Directed by Akitaro Daichi of *Fruits Basket* fame, this laugh-packed show is crammed to the brim with Japanese

cultural references—happily, ADV has packaged this

26-episode set with extensive translation notes and explanations of all the jokes and puns so everyone can enjoy the show to the max.

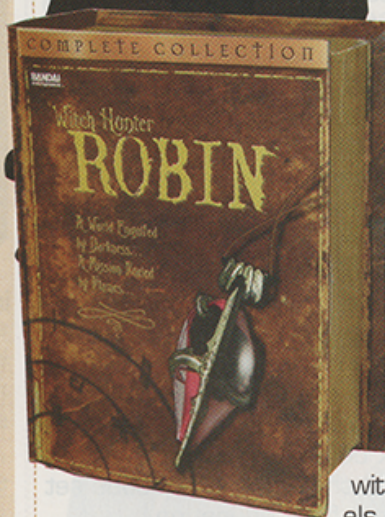


ROBIN SENA

32 WITCH HUNTER ROBIN (Bandai)

Bandai's moody *Witch Hunter Robin* box comes with more free swag than any other series on the market. The first volume comes with an attractive art box, a replica animation cel, a soundtrack, a T-shirt, and even a shot glass! And hey, it certainly doesn't hurt that the 26-episode show is one of the best mystery series ever conceived. In a Tokyo where powerful magic users run amok, it's up to special agents from the STN-J, Japan's witch-busting organization, to bring them down. They can't do it without the help of one Robin Sena, though, a fire-wielding witch

with an enigmatic past who unravels a tangled web of deceit within the very organization she works for, and a secret that reveals the true meaning of witchcraft!



31 RANMA 1/2 SEASON 1 (Viz)

Ranma Saotome's just your average teenager—except that he's heir to the Anything-Goes School of Martial Arts, he's just been involuntarily engaged to the feisty Akane Tendo of said school, and he turns into a girl when doused with cold water. Rumiko Takahashi's martial arts/comedy made a ton of anime in the '90s, thanks to *Ranma's* mix of action and hilarity. The first 18-episode season of the TV series is undoubtedly its best, introducing a crazed cast of characters like Ranma's rival Ryoga, who turns into an adorable pig, his worthless father who turns into a panda, and countless others. Add bizarre martial arts (like gymnastics), plenty of gender-bending and Takahashi's patented

surly-sweet romance between Ranma and Akane, and you've got a must for any anime library.



WEIRDEST DVD EXTRA

NAJICA PANTIES

ADV's *Najica Blitz Tactics* was absolutely snowing panty shots in every scene, and the DVD artbox was no different—this puppy comes with a fluffy pair of white panties emblazoned with the *Najica* logo. And yep, they're big enough to fit even the heartiest of anime fans.



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why is ayumu involved in their dangerous games?

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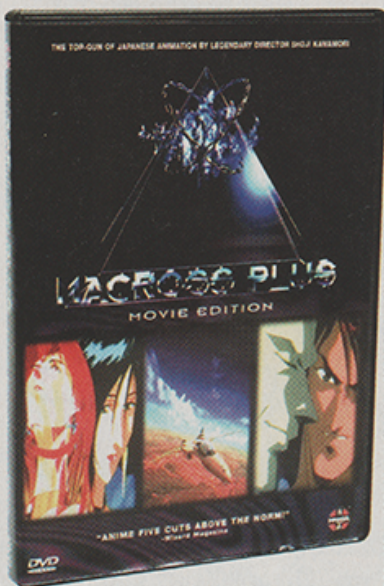
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30 MACROSS PLUS (Manga Entertainment)

Longtime-rivals Isamu and Guld are both test pilots on planet Eden who'll do anything for Myung, a childhood friend who's now a producer for holographic pop idol Sharon Apple. Unfortunately, Isamu's in love with Myung, but Guld has vowed to protect her from him—because of a dark secret none of them can face. Meanwhile, Sharon's become sentient...and fallen in love with Isamu.

Macross Plus more than fills *Macross*'s shoes, thanks to its great characters, gripping plot and all-star production crew. *Macross* creator Shoji Kawamori wrote and directed. The soundtrack by Yoko Kanno (*Cowboy Bebop*) is one of her best, with some of her most eclectic music ever, especially Sharon's future-pop hits. The *Macross Plus* movie edition far outshines its collected OVA series, with many scenes not included in the latter.



29 TRIGUN (Geneon)

The world's most dangerous criminal just wants a donut. Vash the Stampede might have a 60 billion double dollar bounty on his head, but this gunman is an avowed pacifist—unfortunately, the bizarre, homicidal criminals that chase after him aren't. With insurance agents Milly and Meryl (they survey the destruction he constantly attracts) and gun-toting, chain-smoking priest Wolfwood, Vash faces off against the motley Gung-Ho Guns gang of gunmen, samurai, kids and puppeteers, who are all dead set on killing Vash or making him kill, at the behest of their leader Knives. Fans around the world have fallen in love with *Trigun*'s mix of comedy, action and tragedy, as well as its goofy but burdened hero, based on Yasuhiro Nightow's manga. The box set covers the beloved 26-episode series on eight DVDs.

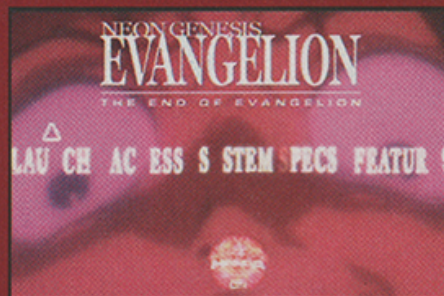


VASH THE STAMPEDE

BEST MENUS

END OF EVANGELION

Manga Entertainment outdid itself in this gorgeous DVD menu, screwing with the minds of audiences like an appetizer to an even more mind-bending film feast. As a soft melody plays in the background, the menu text starts to slowly crumble to the ground, almost symbolizing the end of the movie before it even plays.



28 INTERSTELLA 5555 (Virgin)

What do you get when you combine the house electronica stylings of French musicians Daft Punk with the neo-classic designs of *Galaxy Express 999* auteur Leiji Matsumoto? Distilled awesome, that's what. Originally conceived as a series of animated music videos, the 65-minute film *Interstella 5555* is the entirety of Daft Punk's smash hit 2001 album *Discovery*. Following the album's exact track structure, it's the story of a blue-skinned alien band that gets kidnapped by a nefarious record executive bent on turning them into Earth's next big thing, while hunky mega-fan Shep (and his enviable guitar-shaped spacecraft) race to save them. Whew. The DVD even includes a karaoke mode, which allows you to sing along with the otherwise dialogue-free movie.



27 HELLSING COMPLETE COLLECTION (Geneon)

We all know vampires are the epitome of cool, but you wouldn't know it watching half-baked movies like *Underworld*. Leave it to the Japanese to finally make vampires as cool as they should be! *Hellsing*, a short-but-delicious 13-episode action series, features a badass vampire named Alucard (try spelling it backwards!) in the zombie-slaying service of the Royal Order of Hellsing, a sort of supernatural police department working for the Queen of England. Naturally, the undead don't stand a chance against Alucard; if his guns (made from melted-down crucifixes) don't get the job done, his second form—an infernal black hellhound—certainly will. As a bonus, the first volume features a free blood bag (don't worry, it isn't real blood...we hope).



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26 URUSEI YATSURA: BEAUTIFUL DREAMER (Central Park Media)

As Rumiko Takahashi's first major series, *UY* launched her career, and some fans still think it's her best. It boils down to this: the world's most lecherous and unlucky high school student, Ataru Moroboshi, finds himself saddled with Lum, an incredibly hot alien, as his wife. Lum shocks him anytime he even looks at another girl...which is a lot. Given the huge cast and incredibly wacky situations, it's easier to just call *UY* the *Simpsons* of Japan.

Auteur Mamoru Oshii (*Ghost in the Shell*) turned the second *UY* movie into a masterpiece. While there's plenty of comedy, *Dreamer* turns the series on its ear when Ataru finds himself trapped in a world where he can't tell what's real and what's a dream, and more terrifyingly, is faced with losing Lum forever. Even non-*UY* fans should bring their hanky to this undisputed classic. CPM gets props for getting Oshii to do a riveting commentary track for their Collector Series DVD, and a bit more besides.



25 CASTLE OF CAGLIOSTRO (Manga Entertainment)

While the gentleman-thief Lupin the 3rd has had plenty of movies in his 30-plus-year anime career, no one would ever deny that the Hayao Miyazaki-directed *Castle of Cagliostro* is the best Lupin movie ever. Heck, even famed director Steven Spielberg's called it one of the greatest adventure movies of all time!

When Lupin and his cohort Jigen search for the source of the infamous Cagliostro counterfeit money, Lupin meets Clarisse, a young girl who's soon to wed the evil Count of Cagliostro. Unfortunately, the



Count's got her locked up tight in an unreachable tower of his trap-filled castle. Seems her ring is the key to uncovering the lost treasure of Cagliostro. Can Lupin save the girl, outwit the devious Count and uncover the treasure in time? Presaging his Studio Ghibli work, Miyazaki puts more heart, joy and pure entertainment into *Cagliostro* than most TV series manage. Although the DVD is short on extras, *Cagliostro* is such a masterpiece—full of romance, drama, and Lupin's own trademark wit—that it rockets to this position.

24 WOLF'S RAIN (Bandai)

It's hard to put our #24 into any one category. Is it science fiction? Fantasy? Action? Drama? The sheer creativity at work in Studio BONES' *Wolf's Rain* is precisely what makes it so hard to place; this show is a strikingly original hodgepodge of ancient folklore, modern fantasy and science fiction, brought together in a way unlike anything else. On a post-apocalyptic Earth where legend dictates that only wolves are capable of finding paradise, a wolf named Kiba, who believes he can sniff out where the Promised Land lies, guides three friends across the wasteland. Hindered at every turn by a vicious nobleman named Darcia bent on claiming paradise for his own, the epic journey of Kiba and friends had us on the edge of our seats for 30 brilliant episodes (okay, minus those four recaps in the middle of the series). The DVD set comes with the show's eclectic and addicting soundtrack, an elegant art box and even a plush Kiba doll.



BEST SWAG

WITCH HUNTER ROBIN MINI-CELS

Everyone in the STN-J's too cool for school (you thought we were going to say "too hot to handle," didn't you?). That's one of the reasons we loved the free *Witch Hunter Robin* mini-cels released with every DVD. These plastic, painted cels look just like the real thing!



3 LIMITED
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23 PERFECT BLUE (Manga Entertainment)

The coolest thing about *Perfect Blue* isn't that it could easily have been filmed in live-action—this suspense-horror flick, while

quite the psychological mind-twister, contains nothing fantastical. Director Satoshi Kon (*Tokyo Godfathers*) made his name with this Hitchcockian tale of an ex-pop star named Mima Kirigoe who reluctantly leaves singing to venture into the movie industry at her agent's behest. After she lands a part in a murder mystery, Mima starts to lose it—a psychotic fan begins stalking her, her agent and friends start being murdered, and Mima can no



longer tell what she's filming and what's really happening—and neither can the viewer! As Mima is slowly pulled into a world where nightmares and hellish illusions rule her life, the audience is pulled into a gripping masterpiece of suspense, and a modern anime classic. Kon proves that the scariest stuff is always in the mind, and as far as psychological thrillers go, no anime film even comes close to matching the terrifying beauty of *Perfect Blue*.

21 TENCHI MUYO! OVA COLLECTION (Geneon)

Tenchi Muyo! ruled the '90s on VHS with an arsenal containing space pirates, alien princesses, energy swords and the occasional cat-rabbit hybrid that turns

into a spaceship. But *Tenchi* really reigned supreme with its good-natured, wishy-washy teen hero surrounded by a half-dozen hot chicks. Ordinary high school student Tenchi Masaki unwittingly releases the space pirate Ryoko, who's been trapped in his grandfather's shrine for generations. As it turns out, Ryoko's presence attracts the attention of Jurai princesses Ayeka and Sasami, mad scientist Washu, a Galaxy Police detective—and a whole lot of trouble,

as the various girls decide to move into Tenchi's house and duke it out for his affections.



22 REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA THE MOVIE (Central Park Media)

The boyish Utena has always aspired to become a prince, but everyone keeps reminding her that she's a girl. Girls can't be princes... can they?

When Utena arrives at Ohtori Academy, she learns about a secret society that duels for possession of The Rose Bride, a girl named Anthy. To protect the sometimes-abused Anthy, Utena takes up the sword, fighting to convince both her classmates and Anthy that a person is not an object. But to free Anthy, the two must face realities that neither would like to admit, and in the process Utena realizes that she is a captive as well.

The atmosphere of *Revolutionary Girl Utena* is mysterious and heavily symbolic. Visually, this is one of the most vibrant films out there; it's simply overwhelming. The DVD is loaded with bonus features, but the most impressive is the director's commentary, which reveals the meaning and inspiration behind many of the more complex scenes.

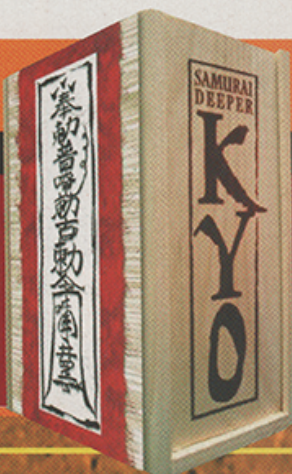
Although *Tenchi* has been revisited countless times in movies and TV series (see page 60 for more), the original 13-episode OVA has maintained a special place in history. Top-notch animation, a boldly original sci-fi setting, hilarious characters and even a little tear-jerking tenderness make this the very best *Tenchi* incarnation of all.



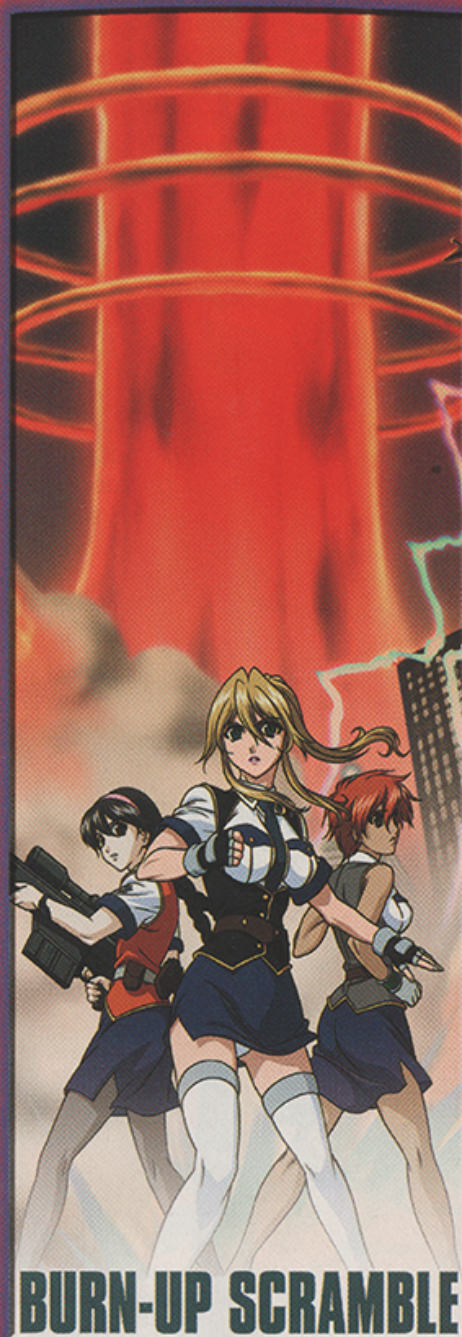
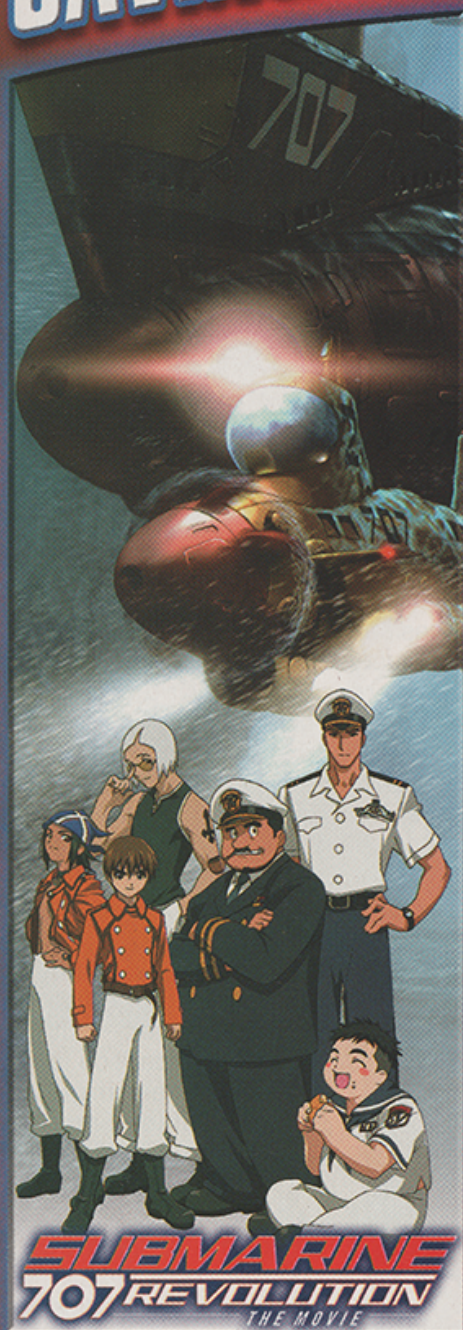
STURDIEST BOX

SAMURAI DEEPER KYO

The wooden *Samurai Deeper Kyo* box, while reasonably stylish, certainly will keep DVDs safe. It was sturdy enough to survive the kick-around-the-office test we subjected it to, and even a two-story drop!



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20 NINJA SCROLL 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION (Manga Entertainment)

Chances are you or someone you know first got into anime by watching *Ninja Scroll*. The movie may have celebrated its 10th anniversary last year, but the action-packed ninja story—and its gorgeous over-the-top animated violence from acclaimed studio Madhouse—still holds up today.

Wandering swordsman Jubei is on the trail of the mysterious and immortal Shogun of the Dark, but first he must deal with his demonic henchmen, the Eight Devils of Kimon. Each is stranger and more powerful than

the last, but Jubei's not alone in his quest. Joining him is Dakuan, the secretive monk working for the government, and Kagero, the tragic lone survivor of her ninja village. Together, they're a formidable trio, but can even they out-trick and outlast the Devils' devastating martial arts techniques?

This fully re-mastered 10th Anniversary Special Edition comes packed with goodies like a photo gallery, jacket sleeve, history of Jubei, interviews, poster, and so much more!

NINJA SCROLL



10TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION
DVD
MANGA ENTERTAINMENT



JUBEI HIBAGAMI

19 CASTLE IN THE SKY (Buena Vista)

Every so often, a movie comes along that's perfect for the entire family, and Miyazaki's *Castle in the Sky* is one of them. Despite being originally released in 1986, this recent facelift includes hours of extras on a two-DVD set.

A young boy named Pazu discovers a young girl named Sheeta floating down from the sky. Pursued by air pirates and an army, the duo soon discovers that Sheeta's gemstone is the key to the legendary floating castle, Laputa. One madman—who claims he and Sheeta are descendants of Laputa's royal lineage—will stop at nothing to use Laputa's technology to rule the world. Only Pazu and Sheeta can stop him, and unlock the secrets of the mysterious castle in the sky.

Gorgeous animation and a story full of high adventure make *Castle in the Sky* an instant classic. For a real treat, check out the second disc to watch the film as shown entirely by Miyazaki's beautiful hand-drawn storyboards, and see a masterpiece in the making!

18 RAHXEPHON TV SERIES (ADV)

When you listen to the opening song of *RahXephon*, it seems oddly tuneless and harmonic at the

same time—a perfect fit for this inspired giant robot series. Young Ayato Kamina is struggling to find harmony with the world around him, but it's difficult when he discovers that his whole life has been a lie. The Tokyo that he's been living in is actually an alien-controlled sphere in which time progresses slower than normal, his mother is an alien Mulian leader, and because Ayato is the only one who can pilot the mecha-like god RahXephon, everyone is trying to use him to win the Mulian-human war.

Because it's a mecha show, it was inevitable that *RahXephon* be weighed against *Eva*—but the comparison is overwhelmingly favorable. Fans who were confused by *Eva* will love the clarity and strength of this story. Beautiful visuals combine with a musical aesthetic to make a moving series of 26 episodes that nails the mystery while avoiding the melodrama.



AYATO KAMINA



BEST QUOTE FROM A COMMENTARY TRACK

REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA THE MOVIE

"Or maybe it's just me who wants to see them kiss." —Director Kunihiro Ikuhara on the higher meaning behind the hotly debated Utena/Anthy kiss in *Revolutionary Girl Utena The Movie*.

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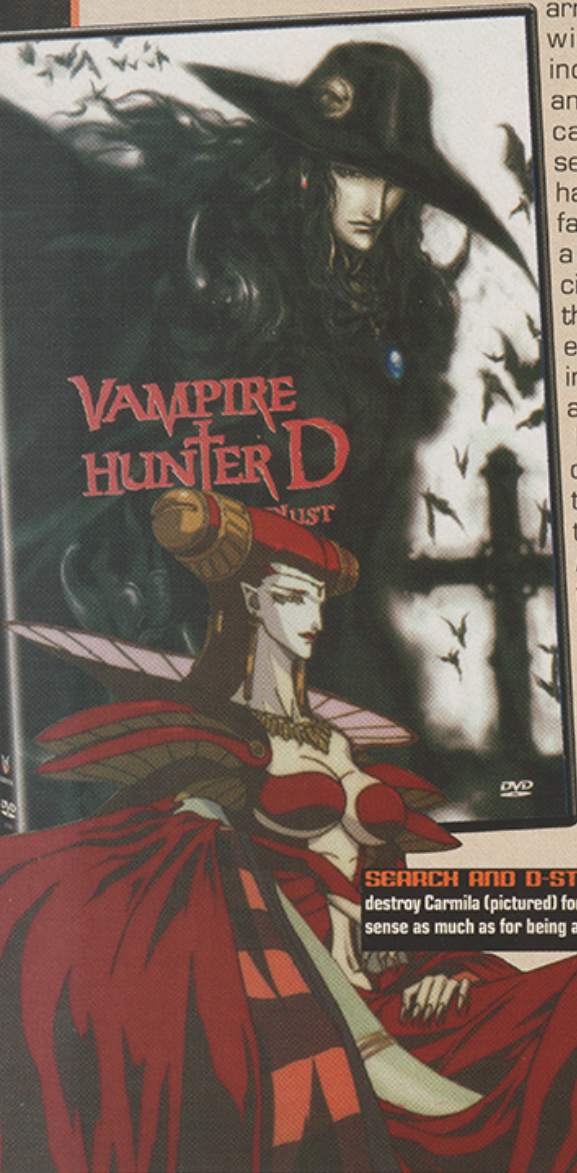


17 VAMPIRE HUNTER D: BLOODLUST (Urban Vision)

Okay, so the first *Vampire Hunter D* is a classic, but *Ninja Scroll* director Yoshiaki Kawajiri's version is a god-send for vampire fans everywhere; a bloodier update that improves on the original in every possible way. In the distant future, Earth is a wasteland ruled by monsters that lurk in both the day and night, terrorizing the remaining non-evil populace. When a powerful vampire count named Meier Link steals a beautiful country girl, Charlotte, her family hires the famous dhampir (half human, half vampire) D to kill Meier and rescue Charlotte. D,

armed to the teeth with a bevy of incredible attacks and a talking hand capable of laying serious waste, will have his hands full facing off against a courtyard full of circus freaks and the vampire countess who will stand in the way of him and his prey.

Madhouse pulled out every last trick in the book to make *Bloodlust* a must-have for any anime fan; you'd be crazy not to have this one in your collection.



SEARCH AND D-STROY D seeks to destroy Carmila (pictured) for her lack of fashion sense as much as for being a vampire.

16 ESCAFLWNE PERFECT VISION (Bandai)

Macross Plus director Shoji Kawamori's epic fantasy opus *The Vision of Escaflowne* commanded a colossal fan following in America, which came as a real surprise since the show had trouble finding an audience in Japan. In this 26-episode series, tarot-reading Hitomi finds herself whisked away to Gaia, a fantasy world ruled by fearsome ancient mecha. There, alongside boyfriend-to-be Van Fanel and blonde dreamboat Allen Schezar, Hitomi realizes the amazing power her divination has over the world of Gaia; it's a twist ending you have to see to believe! With a thrilling score by ace

composer Yoko Kanno, *The Vision of Escaflowne* comes in a gorgeously designed art box, along with a slew of extras featuring the show's Japanese voice cast screwing around in live-action shorts. Thanks to the crystal-clear DVD picture quality, Hitomi and friends may be pushing 10 years old, but the show looks like it could have been made yesterday. Not even Miss Cleo could have predicted *that*.

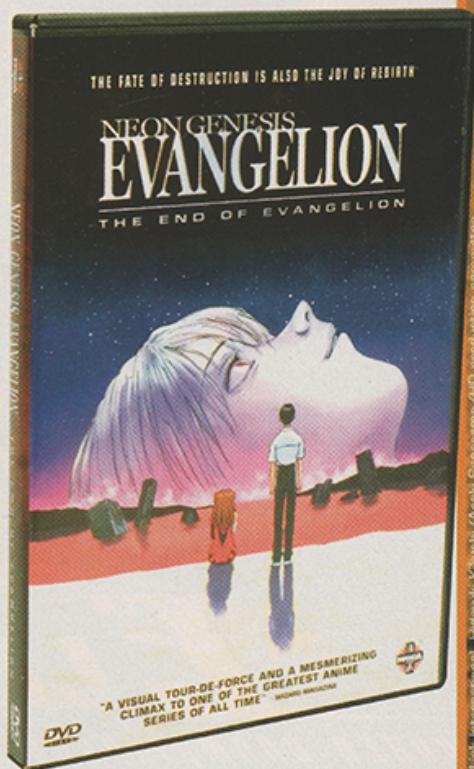


15 THE END OF EVANGELION (Manga Entertainment)

After watching the final two episodes of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, most fans felt betrayed and confused. However, when two movies were later released from studios Gainax and Production I.G, fans rejoiced at the proffered alternate ending, even though not all the mysteries were resolved.

A continuation and sequel movie to *Death and Rebirth*, *End of Evangelion* picks up with Asuka Soryu Langley standing off against all the Mass Production Evangelion, with only a few minutes' backup power left. NERV Headquarters is under siege from invading ground forces. Seele and Gendo Ikari fight to bring their secret plans to fruition, even as it becomes clear that the fate of humanity rests on young Shinji Ikari. Too bad he's still unable—and unwilling—to fight in EVA Unit-01.

End of Evangelion features stunning visuals coupled with a story so startling and depressing that it's become a whirlwind of controversy ever since. DVD bonuses include the English-dub voice actors from the original ADV series, and a super-encyclopedia of everything *Evangelion*!



THE LEGACY CONTINUES...

DRAGON BALL GT



A HERO'S LEGACY THE MOVIE

AVAILABLE ON DVD AND VHS NOVEMBER 16

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 **FUNimation**
Productions, Ltd.

14 MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM SEED (Bandai)

Giant robots in space? Check. Angst-ridden pretty boys? Check. All style and no substance? No way. The natural-born Earth Forces are at war with the genetically engineered ZAFT troops. Young Kira Yamato is unwillingly pulled into the conflict when his supposedly neutral colony is attacked by ZAFT, and he slowly sheds his naiveté as he is forced to fight against his own people to protect the ones he loves.

By far one of the most popular incarnations of the venerable *Gundam* franchise, *Gundam SEED* successfully blended many different genres to create a 50-episode series that would appeal to everyone. But it's not just another pretty, deadly face. *SEED* also explores the messy subjects of war and patriotism unflinchingly, never supporting one side too heavily, and thus leaving



OUTGUNNED Before he shoots you down, Kira would like you to know that he cares about your feelings.



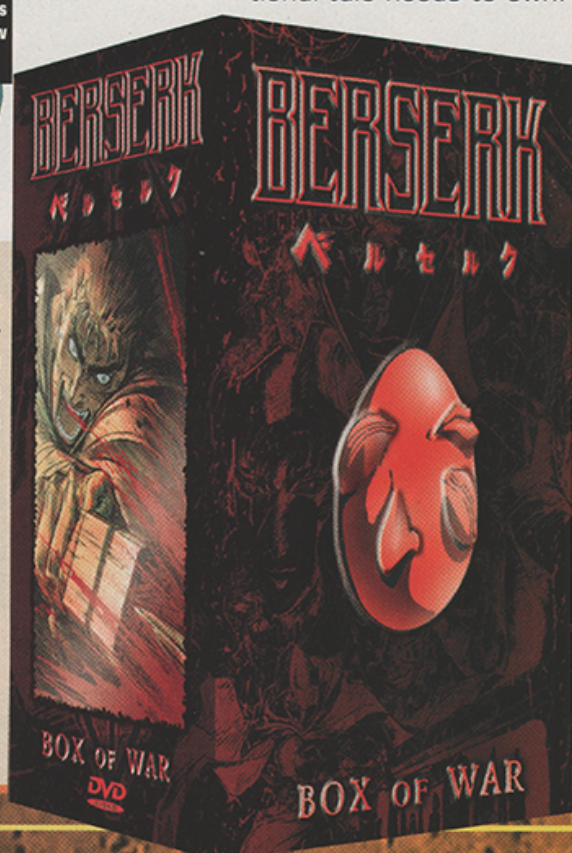
its viewers to form their own opinions. If you can snag the limited edition art box, do so—it comes with a *SEED* soundtrack CD featuring J-pop artists T.M. Revolution and Nami Tamaki.

13 GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES (Central Park Media)

It's the *Schindler's List* of the anime world. Directed by Studio Ghibli's Isao Takahata, this heart-wrenching glimpse of Japan during the second World War follows a young orphan named Seita and his young sister Setsuko after they lose their family and home to a Kobe air raid. Striking out on their own, the two try desperately to stay alive in an abandoned bomb shelter they use as their makeshift



home. Unlike most depressing movies, this film doesn't go out of its way to force emotions on the audience. Instead, it paints a quiet story of two siblings and their struggle to live out their lives, using the historical significance of World War II and the impact of realism to drive the sadness home. With director's commentary and interviews with experts on Japan's Pacific War, Central Park Media's special Collector's Series of *Grave of the Fireflies* is something that every history buff and lover of a good, emotional tale needs to own.



12 BERSERK BOX OF WAR (Media Blasters)

Based on Kentaro Miura's best-selling manga of the same name, *Berserk* gave a whole new meaning to the term "dark fantasy." A relentlessly violent tale of betrayal, revenge and yes, even love, *Berserk* caught viewers expecting another hack-and-slash blood-fest by surprise for being, of all things, captivating and even poignant. Mercenary Guts' adventures with the White Hawk brigade run the gamut from epic military battles to traumatizing fights with the darkest spiritual powers, and at every turn the show will leave you wanting more (particularly the still-talked-about cliffhanger ending). Media Blasters' beautifully handled DVD release comes loaded with Miura's amazing art, hilarious dub outtakes (including White Hawks leader Griffith singing "I'm just a girl who can't say no"), and metric ton of Easter eggs. It's 25 episodes of blood-soaked drama in one of the sturdiest and most attractive art boxes ever assembled, and it more than earns its place as #12 on our list.

11 COWBOY BEBOP PERFECT COLLECTION (Bandai)

Suave bounty hunters, sexy women, hot heart-pumping action and cool jazz? It can only be *Cowboy Bebop*. Spike Spiegel's a laid-back guy with a flair for the debonair. His partner is Jet Black, an ex-cop who keeps the group down to earth. Faye Valentine is a preposterously hot gambling addict with a mysterious past. Ed is the spaced-out hacker girl genius—and let's not forget Ein, the dog that vaulted Welsh corgis into a position of near sainthood in the hearts of fandom. Together, these disparate elements form the coolest group of bounty hunters, and they barrel across the galaxy catching intergalactic terrorists and criminals.

But *Bebop* is far more than just gunfights and high-speed spaceship chases—underneath that showy hood is an emotional tale of revenge, ruined friendship and lost love

as Spike is inexorably drawn back into the deadly web of mafia killer Vicious and Julia, the love who betrayed him. Backed by a jaw-dropping soundtrack from composer extraordinaire Yoko Kanno, the eclectic mix of jazz, blues, and soul permeating the series makes it as much of a feast for your ears as your mind. Which is why it's no surprise that the 26-episode *Cowboy Bebop Perfect Collection* comes packaged with the first soundtrack. This hot Bandai release packs a serious punch for anyone in need of a double shot of excitement.



10 FRUITS BASKET (FUNimation)

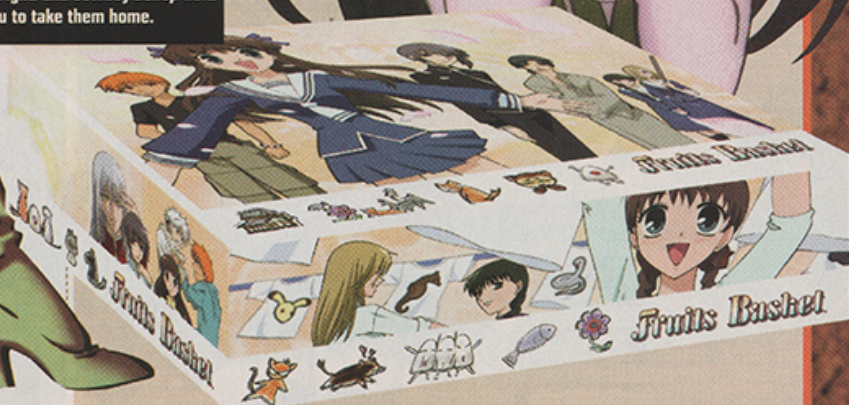
Tohru Honda is a sweet, typical high school girl who works hard for average grades and holds down an after-school job as a maid. She also just happens to be orphaned and living in a tent, but she tries not to let any of that get her down. When the Sohma family discovers Tohru's tent on their property, they kindly decide to take her in, which is when she discovers their dark secret: they each turn into different animals of the Chinese zodiac when hugged by a member of the opposite sex. Understandably, this makes them feel a little isolated, and Tohru feels sympathetic—after all, she's living by herself in a tent, something she'd never tell even her closest friends.

Bittersweet struggle is the focus of the overwhelmingly popular *Fruits Basket*. The main characters all feel alienated from the rest of the "normal" world in some way, but they don't wallow forever in misery. They change. They help each other out. They get on with their lives. It's a pretty healthy ethic, and the perfect balance for the angsty, revenge-filled shows in your library.

The entire 26-episode series also comes with a "Behind the Scenes" mini-documentary and interviews with director Akitaroh Daichi and Japanese voice actors. If you're looking for a sweet, uplifting show that isn't unrealistically cheerful, this one's ripe for the picking.



HEY LADIES The women of *Fruits Basket* (right) and *Cowboy Bebop* (left) want you to take them home.



9 READ OR DIE (Manga Entertainment)

Wearing glasses is finally cool again, thanks to *R.O.D. (Read or Die)*, the fast-paced, action-packed series about...uh, books? Well, books and espionage, that is. Self-professed bookworms will probably already have this three-episode OVA, but it belongs on your shelf even if the last thing you read was your cable bill.

The James Bond-flavored story follows the adventures of Yomiko Readman (agent name: "The Paper"), a frumpy woman who has perpetual bed-head, a first-class love affair with books, and the ability to manipulate all things paper. These traits make her perfectly suited to retrieve dangerous books for the British Library's top-secret branch. Currently she's on the trail of the I-gin, a group of clones intent on destroying the world by recreating and broadcasting Beethoven's legendary "Death Symphony," which compels listeners to commit suicide. Along the way, she'll deal with murderous clones of historical figures, giant robots, and one seriously sexy agent who can phase through solid objects.

Beautiful and suspenseful, *R.O.D.* will thrill you with plot twists and double-crosses. Its attention to detail is even obvious in the DVD menus. The "chapter" menu features

a bibliography [complete with Library of Congress call numbers] for each chapter's characters, themes, and locations. Ultimately, *R.O.D.* proves it's so very cool to be obsessed with reading.



YOMIKO READMAN

8 ROBOTECH LEGACY: THE MACROSS SAGA (ADV Films)

Anime fandom wouldn't be where it is today without the war epic cobbled together from three unrelated, utterly separate anime by Carl Macek in 1985. The first and foremost was *The Macross Saga*, which captivated boys and girls alike with transforming jet/mecha called Veritechs and the best love story ever animated.

In *Macross*, after an alien spaceship crash-lands on Earth, humans retrofit the ship and use its alien Robotechnology to design nifty jet-robots called Veritechs. When the giant alien race called the Zentraedi come for the ship, the inexperienced crew—along with young involuntary draftee Rick Hunter—try to fight off the superior numbers and power of the Zentraedi. But the real action is found in the relationships, as 26-year-old ship captain Lisa Hayes falls in love with and eventually washes the underwear of brash 20-year-old Rick Hunter, who obsessively and pathetically lusts after the 16-year old blossoming music/video star Minmei, who remains infatuated with her cousin Lynn Kyle, who throws gin bottles at her.

It's the greatest love story of the 20th century. ADV Films did this monumental series right with its Legacy boxed sets; each of the three *Macross* box sets (collecting *Macross*' 36 episodes) come with a bonus DVD of goodies including the original toy commercials (hilarious!), a treasure trove of supplemental info and art, and tons more. *Macross* is certainly a legacy worth preserving, and these DVDs do it justice.

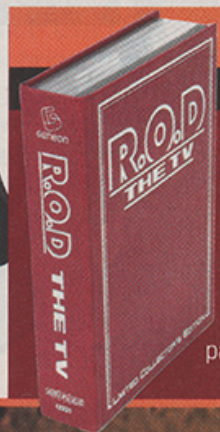


UF-15 VERITECH

BEST DVD CASE

R.O.D. THE TV LIMITED COLLECTOR'S EDITION

If you're a big anime fan, then your shelves are full to bursting with anime DVDs. So it was very nice of Geneon to release its awesome *R.O.D. the TV* in this swanky leather-bound book, which holds all the series' DVDs, is a perfect fit with the book-obsessed show and saves some needed shelf space. Other companies, take note!



7 FLCL (Synch-Point)

If you've sat down to watch *FLCL* (a.k.a. *Fooly Cooly*, or *Furi Kuri* in Japanese) and come out of it scratching your head, you're not alone. Easily one of the wackiest and most thought-provoking series to make its way to the U.S., *FLCL* is a story about a young boy named Naota who must deal with the pains of growing up and interacting with the adult world. Disgusted by the way adults behave, Naota would like nothing more than to remain a child. The sudden appearance of Haruko, a pink-haired alien who rides a Vespa and wields a guitar like a baseball bat, throws Naota's world into a tizzy and thrusts him into the world of adults. Did we forget to mention that the world of adults involves monsters popping out of Naota's forehead and then him battling said monsters with the heart of an all-star baseball batter?

If the plot wasn't crazy enough, Production I.G. and Gainax employ an unheard-of sketchy style of animation that goes so far as to animate an entire scene as if the audience were reading a manga! The music, some of which was done by the Japanese rock band The Pillows, intensifies the upbeat and crazy mood. As for the DVD itself, extras you'll find include director's commentary for all six episodes, dubbing outtakes, and booklets filled with translation notes.

WILD CHILD Left to right: Canti, Haruko and Naota, seen in an unusually serene moment.

BEST DVD ART BOX

RAHXEPHON THE MOVIE: PLURALITAS CONCERTIO

The first box ADV Films released for *RahXephon* was purely functional; Then the *RahXephon* movie came out, and ADV released this gem: an ultra-sturdy, beautifully designed art box covered in the show's gorgeous watercolor promotional art. Not only does the box hold the film, but it's also got space for the entire TV series!



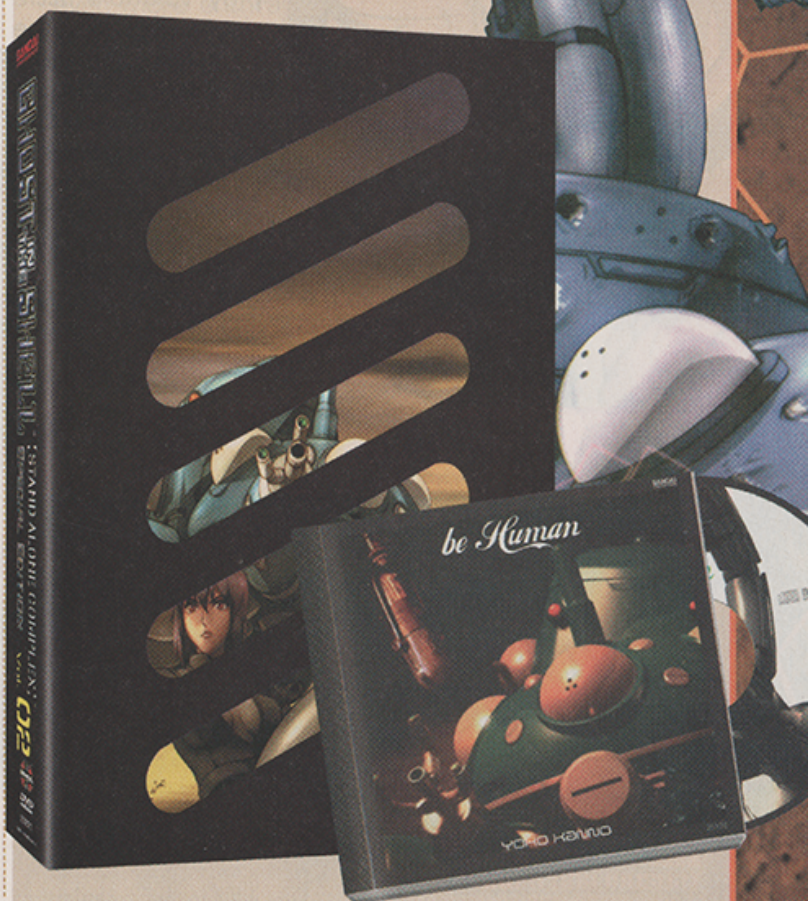
6 GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX LIMITED EDITIONS (Bandai/Manga Entertainment)

The year is 2030. Mankind's technology and science have evolved to the point where any organ, limb, or entire body can be improved with the use of cybernetics. At the same time, machines have become so human that some have developed consciousnesses, or "ghosts." All these changes pose one very important question: what makes one human?

Masamune Shirow asked this question in the original manga, *Ghost in the Shell*, on which *Stand Alone Complex*, two critically acclaimed movies and a second manga series were heavily based. Major Motoko Kusanagi, who's spent almost her entire life within a cybernetic body, leads a top-secret government organization known as Section 9 on some of the most dangerous and delicate situations that Japan's unstable society has to throw at them. In this first 26-episode season of *Stand Alone Complex*, Section 9's most troublesome case revolves around the Laughing Man, a faceless figure who will do whatever is necessary to make sure that the world knows the truth about cyberbrain sclerosis, a fatal disease.

Production I.G. is responsible for *Stand Alone Complex*'s stellar animation and CG effects, easily making this one of the most visually stunning anime series on the market. Plus the Limited Edition includes separate Dolby Digital and DTS discs, with an unforgettable bonus soundtrack CD by the phenomenally talented Yoko Kanno (*Escaflowne*, *Cowboy Bebop*, *Wolf's Rain*).

MOTOKO KUSANAGI



5 HIS & HER CIRCUMSTANCES (Right Stuff)

Sweet enough for gals, but funny and down-to-earth enough for guys, the show proves once and for all that high school romantic comedies can be thought-provoking, too. But that's what you would expect when *Neon Genesis Evangelion* director Hideaki Anno chooses to direct a high school romance!

The heroine is a spunky gal named Yukino Miyazawa whose only goal in life is to be the best at everything, whether it's grades, popularity or even niceness. Things are great until the even-more-perfect Souchirou Arima shows up, who's everything Yukino is...but genuinely nice.

The thought of being second place drives her crazy, so Yukino plots a dark revenge on Arima...until she falls in love with him. But can their relationship survive crazy friends, interfering school-teachers, summer vacation and the pitfalls of simply being high school students? Even more than its sweetness and humor, the 26 episodes of *His & Hers* just ring true—it's such a realistic look at love and all of the accompanying highs and lows that'll you'll recognize yourself in Yukino and Arima.

Happily, the DVDs are a purist's dream—everything is translated, from the "don't sit too close" warning to Anno's trademark on-screen text to replacing the live-action shots of the Japanese voice actresses who play Yukino's little sisters describing the next episode with the American voice actresses doing the same thing! *His & Hers* is a paragon of anime romance on a paragon of anime DVDs.

SOUCHIROU AND YUKINO

HOTTEST DVD COVER (FOR GIRLS)

DESCENDANTS OF DARKNESS



TSUZUKI AND MURAKI

What's hotter than one gorgeous guy? Two gorgeous guys...with each other, of course. (A heaping helping of supernatural thrills doesn't hurt either.) Cover boys Tsuzuki and Muraki's creepy relationship is the cornerstone of many a fanfic.

4 AKIRA (Geneon)

Everyone's seen *Akira*. Everyone has an opinion on *Akira*. Chances are, you've argued about what *Akira* is supposed to mean. Director Katsuhiro Otomo's sprawling and controversial sci-fi epic has dominated the anime landscape since it first found its way to American shores back in 1988, and people are still talking about it now. This utterly engrossing tale follows two wasted youths in a biker gang; the older one, Kaneda, loses his brother Tetsuo to a mutant virus called Akira. The virus is the product of a secret government project, and eventually turns Tetsuo into a huge disgusting ball of flesh. Sure, it sounds gross, but what takes everyone by surprise is how undeniably cool it is! Both a "gateway drug" to the world of anime and a timeless classic among fans, *Akira* astounded audiences with its bombastic violence and heart-wrenching conclusion.

In 2001, Geneon Entertainment restored *Akira*, bringing new life to Otomo's film. This double-disc special edition includes rare interview footage with Otomo himself, a special documentary about the film's eclectic music, and a fresh translation that literally brings new meaning to the world of *Akira*, making the previously incomprehensible plot suddenly crystal clear. If that still isn't enough, it even comes packaged in a limited edition metal case. Simply put, no anime collection is complete without *Akira*; or any science-fiction collection, or any animated film collection, or any film collection...

TAKING AIM Kaneda knows his movie rocks, and he isn't afraid to prove it to you.

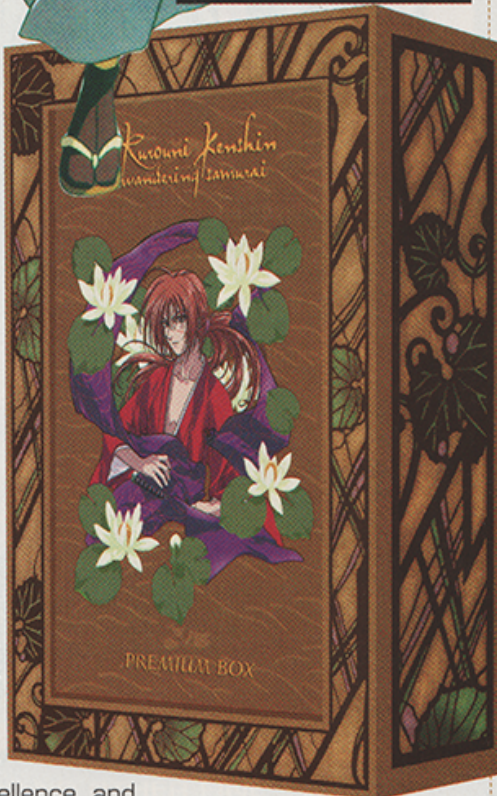


3 RUROUNI KENSHIN: LEGENDS OF KYOTO (Media Blasters)

Most anime fans will tell you that any long-running action series will have its good parts as well as its bad parts. For the celebrated samurai series *Rurouni Kenshin*, *Legends of Kyoto* (which consists of 34 episodes of the show's second season) is just one long good part. Eschewing the series' earlier tendency to be mostly episodic, *Legends of Kyoto* follows our favorite red-headed ronin with a backwards blade alongside power-punching pal Sanosuke and everyone's favorite smooth anti-hero Saitou Hajime as they fight for justice against the vengeful mummified Shishio and his band of superbly freakish villains. *Kyoto* is everything that makes the *Kenshin* series so great; memorable characters, outstanding fight choreography, breakneck pacing and outstanding music. Unforgettable scenes like Kenshin's first bleeding-edge battle with Saitou, the breaking of Kenshin's famous sword and his nerve-racking fight with Aoshi defined what action meant to an entire generation of anime fans. At once highly accessible and yet steeped in real-life Japanese history (well, okay, some of it is kinda based on real-life Japanese history), *Legends of Kyoto* is basically one long, eternally satisfying string of incredible fight scenes and high drama. This box set collects the entire *Kyoto* storyline (available previously only as eight unwieldy individual releases) in an attractive and creative box that invokes the design sensibility of the series itself. What it lacks in extras it makes up for in sheer content; this is over *fourteen hours* of anime excellence, and any anime fan without our #3 in their collection would be seriously suspect.



RED-HEADED STEPCILD
Kenshin's sword blade is on the wrong side, but you still don't want to be on his wrong side.



2 SPIRITED AWAY (Buena Vista)

Your perfect anime library simply would not be complete without the first anime movie to ever win an Academy Award, not to mention the highest-grossing film in Japanese history.

Spirited Away is a gorgeous, enchanting movie that many have called one of director Hayao Miyazaki's (*Princess Mononoke*, *My Neighbor Totoro*) most accessible to a Western audience. The story follows sulky young Chihiro, whose family stumbles into what looks like an abandoned theme park on their drive to their new home. When her parents turn into pigs (literally) after gorging themselves on mysterious food, Chihiro must grow up enough to find a way to change her parents back.

Like many fairytales, the story is a metaphor—in this case, for our struggle to remain uncorrupted in a world that is not black and white. Chihiro and her friend Haku cannot escape their enslavement to the witch Yubaba until they remember who they are, which is a subtle nudge at grown-ups and kids alike.

Making this release even more enthralling is the second disc of the set, which overflows with goodies, including assorted documentaries and interviews, a storyboard-to-scene featurette, and a 41-minute special that originally aired on Nippon TV featuring a fascinating look at Miyazaki at work. Enjoyable for kids of any age, *Spirited Away* is a must-have masterpiece. In fact, there's only one collection that has it beat...



CHIHIRO

HOTTEST DVD COVER (FOR BOYS)

STEEL ANGEL KURUMI 2



Oh sure, the cover of ADV Films' boy-meets-hot-robot-girl farce *Steel Angel Kurumi 2* might look innocent enough, but slide out the plastic sheet and their coquettish outfits come right off, revealing the girls in their underwear!

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION: PLATINUM EDITION (ADV Films)

1 It's the ultimate edition of the most famous, popular and controversial anime series of all time, so it should come as no surprise that *Neon Genesis Evangelion: Platinum Edition* is our #1 anime DVD of all time. Love it or hate it, you can't deny that Hideaki Anno's groundbreaking, angst-ridden, 26-episode series, which began in 1995, is the most influential and celebrated anime of the past decade. The Platinum Edition—newly released by ADV Films—breathes fresh life into the series and reminds us all why it's so beloved.

The show started out deceptively simple; mild-mannered milquetoast Shinji Ikari is called upon by his enigmatic (and bearded) father, Gendo, to pilot the experimental Evangelion Unit 01 against the onslaught of the Angels, mysterious beings that threaten the already-fragile thread of life in post-apocalyptic Tokyo-3. A now-iconic cast filled the show's ranks, including a tempestuous redhead named Asuka (with some pretty severe parental issues) and the morose, disaffected EVA pilot (pilots?) named Rei, both of whom swiftly became Japan's most popular sex symbols.

As a flood of cryptic religious references found their way into the increasingly confusing, fanservice-laden and blood-spattered series, fans started realizing that *Evangelion* wasn't like anything they'd seen before; it was less about giant robots fighting aliens and more about one seemingly spineless child's slow descent into madness, surrounded by the trappings of an apocalypse rooted in ancient legend. The ultimate final goal of the Evangelion project—spearheaded by his own father and designed to push Earth's "restart" button, in so many words—drives Shinji over the edge, taking the audience with him, and it's his final decision that drives the fate of the entire world. The ending, which nearly 10 years later is *still* a point of contention among anime fans, has remained one of the most controversial, confusing and captivating anime endings of all time. No matter how you slice it, *Evangelion* is a masterpiece.

So, after a slew of home video versions—four in all, counting the most recent edition—ADV Films has seen fit to release the Platinum Edition. Released in 2003 in Japan, the Platinum Edition is a highly polished version of the series; Gainax gave the show a serious spit shine, even removing the show's infamous "jitter," bouncing frames that happened after every jump cut. The new set comes loaded with multiple commentary tracks, including one by the show's English-language producer, Matt Greenfield, who explains the show's myriad mysteries once and for all (which doesn't mean you can't still come up with your own theories about the ending). Heck, the set even comes in a shiny silver box; what more can fans ask for?

Simply put, this is a jaw-dropping, truly incredible DVD release of the anime series that sparked a revolution. No fan should be without it.

Thanks to Rebecca Bundy, Bamboo Dong and Miguel A.E. Esquivel for their help in compiling this feature.



OL' RED EYES Rei Ayanami quickly became every fanboy's dream girl—happily, there were enough of her to go around.



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MUYO



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO 'TENCHI MUYO,' ITS UNIVERSE(S), AND EVERYTHING

BY ADAM ARNOLD

AND THE A.I. STAFF

Tenchi Masaki—hero to millions, savior of the galaxy, unlikely lothario—is leading a *secret double-life*.

Okay, maybe it's not so secret. And maybe it's not so double as it is quadruple or quintuple. As any of *Tenchi Muyo!*'s countless fans can tell you, trying to make sense of the various *Tenchi* anime, manga and whatnot that have been released over the past 12 years is a high impossible task.

The problem is that depending on which *Tenchi* TV series you watch, which OVA you see, which manga you read or whatever—*Tenchi*'s story is different. Sure, it's *always* about the exploits of the not-so-average average-joe *Tenchi*, and how a bevy of startlingly hot alien girls come live at his house and fight over him, and how he ends up coming into enough power to fight millennia-old villains and save the galaxy. But the details differ greatly. While there are two main storylines—the original OVA universe and TV universe—there are plenty of offshoots from each, making trying to fit them all together a nightmare.

Although *Tenchi Muyo!* means “no need for *Tenchi*,” what folks do need is a way to set straight all these stories. With the next installment of the original OVA series due in 2005 from FUNimation, *Anime Insider* decided it was high time to sort out all the catastrophically crazy continuities the *Tenchi* franchise has gone through over the past decade. So strap into your cabbit and power up your Light Hawk Wings, 'cause it ain't gonna be an easy ride!

CHICK MAGNET Tenchi (center) isn't only the most popular boy at this prom but in the universe.

ADONESS

THE RYO-OHKI OVA UNIVERSE

[1] TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI OVA I

Episodes 1-4 (1992, Pioneer)

Tenchi Masaki was an ordinary high school student until he unwittingly released the demon Ryoko from her 700-year imprisonment, who promptly goes on an explosive rampage inside Tenchi's school! Princess Ayeka of the planet Jurai arrives in episode 2 on a quest to find her long lost bother, Yoshio; instead she finds Ryoko, the very person responsible for his disappearance!

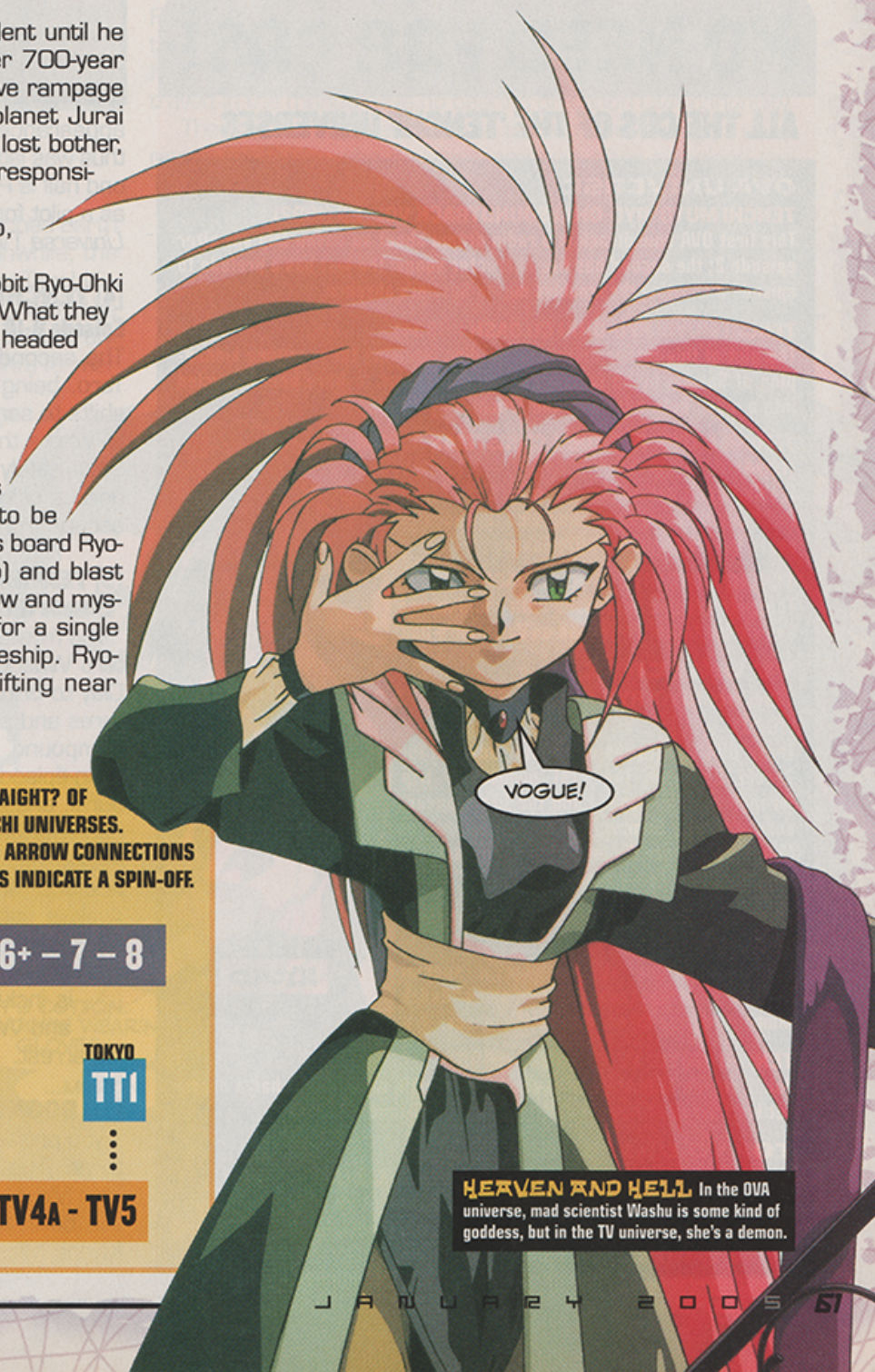
After some major interstellar hi-jinks, Ryoko, Ayeka and Ayeka's little sister, Sasami, all become stranded on Earth and are joined by adorable cabbit Ryo-Ohki and bubble-headed Galaxy Police officer Mihoshi. What they don't know is that a deadly intergalactic criminal is headed their way!

[2] TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI OVA I

Episodes 5-6 (1993, Pioneer)

The murderous fugitive Kagato arrives and seizes Ryoko, dragging her into space and claiming to be her rightful creator. Tenchi and the remaining girls board Ryo-Ohki (who conveniently turns into a space ship) and blast off in hot pursuit. Unfortunately, even Tenchi's new and mysterious Light Hawk Wings power is no match for a single well-placed blast from the Soja, Kagato's battleship. Ryo-Ohki is heavily damaged and Tenchi is left drifting near lifeless in space.

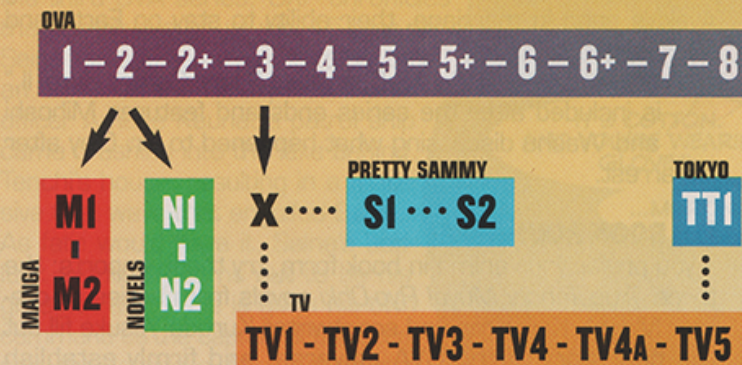
Back on Earth, Sasami senses Tenchi's life slipping away and the sleeping goddess within her, Tsunami, awakens and merges with Tenchi. Meanwhile, aboard the Soja, Mihoshi has released a young girl named Washu who claims to not only be the greatest scientific genius in the universe, but also the creator of Ryo-Ohki, the Soja and even Ryoko!



THE MAP

NEED HELP KEEPING ALL THESE TENCHIS STRAIGHT? OF COURSE YOU DO. HERE'S A MAP TO ALL THE TENCHI UNIVERSES.

STRAIGHT LINE CONNECTIONS INDICATE REGULAR CONTINUITY, ARROW CONNECTIONS INDICATE A DIVERGING STORYLINE, AND DOTTED CONNECTIONS INDICATE A SPIN-OFF.



HEAVEN AND HELL In the OVA universe, mad scientist Washu is some kind of goddess, but in the TV universe, she's a demon.

[2+] TENCHI MUYO! SOUND FILE OVA (1993, unlicensed)

A single volume OVA consisting of six eye-opening anime music videos that spotlight particular characters, including Magical Girl Pretty Sammy and Ayeka, who delivers S&M-esque whipping to Tenchi in "Call Me Princess."

[3] TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI OVA 1

Episode 7 (1993, Pioneer)

The Night Before the Carnival was released before anyone knew whether Tenchi would continue as an OVA series or a TV show. The episode primarily deals with wrapping up loose ends from the Kagato attack and pitting Ayeka and Ryoko against one another in a war to win Tenchi's heart...using romance manga as their guide!

[X-DIVERGENCE FROM OVA 1]

TENCHI MUYO! MIHOSHI SPECIAL (1994, Pioneer)

Originally meant to be placed between OVA episodes 7 and 8, this special has Mihoshi recounting her greatest case, the Ultra Energy Matter robberies, and marks the first anime



appearance of Mihoshi's galaxy police partner Kiyone—and thus was later knocked out of the OVA continuity. Since the second half is Pretty Sammy's second anime adventure, this acts as a pilot for both the *Pretty Sammy* OVA and the later *Tenchi Universe* TV series!

[4] TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI OVA 2

Episode 8-10 (1994, Pioneer)

The second OVA series kicks off with Tenchi's baby cousin, Taro, being dumped on the family for a few days and then shifts to some ghost busting at a hot spring resort in episode 9, where the secrets behind Sasami's past begin to unravel. Once safely back home, Ryo-Ohki gets causes a highly dangerous colony of shape-shifting creatures known as Mass to escape from Washu's lab; chaos ensues.

[5] TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI OVA 2

Episode 11-13.5 (1994-1995, Pioneer)

The mysterious Lady Tokimi has grown suspicious of her sisters Washu and Tsunami and has ordered the villainous Dr. Clay to bring Washu to her. Zero, a shape-shifting spy, captures and assumes Ryoko's identity and infiltrates the Tenchi compound, but is found out in short order.

In episode 13, Ayeka and Sasami's parents, Azusa, king of Jurai, and his two wives, Misaki and Funaho, arrive on Earth dead-set on bringing the girls back home. Unfortunately for Ayeka, her suitor, Seiryu Tennan, was brought along for the ride and Tenchi has to face him in a duel with the stakes being Ayeka's hand in marriage, their ability to stay on Earth and Ryoko's debts.

A five-minute episode 13.5, entitled "Here Comes Jurai II," is included after the series ends and features Mihoshi and Washu discussing what happened to Dr. Clay after his arrest.

[5+] BOOK ROUND-UP

If you prefer your anime in book form, try these imports: the three *True Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki* novels from series co-creator Masaki Kajishima and scriptwriter Kuroda Yosuke fill out the backstory of the OVA universe, and firmly establish Kiyone Misaki as Tenchi's mother (not Achika).

NO NEED FOR CDS!

ALL THE CDS OF THE 'TENCHI' UNIVERSES

OVA UNIVERSE

TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI SOUNDTRACK VOL. 1-3 (1992)

This first OVA soundtrack is a radio drama about an onsen trip set after episode 2; the second has five character songs; the last has a prelude to episode 8 showing the troubles during Sasami's absence.

TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI CD DASH 1 (1994)

The plot of this rather disappointing disc involving the mealtime kidnapping of Sasami by an invading spaceship seems to have been recycled into a much better form as the *Tenchi-Muyo!* RPG.

TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI CHRISTMAS ALBUM (1994)

It's Christmas and all the girls play "Little Match Girl" to get Tenchi something nice. Includes the super secret origin of Pretty Sammy.

TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI CD DASH 2 (1995)

The girls become engrossed with shojo manga and vie for Tenchi's affection on Valentine's Day.

TV UNIVERSE

TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI CD SPECIAL 1 & 2 (1993)

These OVA sidestories were later adapted for *Tenchi Universe*. The first involves a trip through time and space and the first appearance of Pretty Sammy; the second introduces Mihoshi's partner Kiyone as the gang visits the solar system's "seven unknown onsen."

TENCHI MUYO! SECRET TREASURE CHAMBER (1995)

This five-CD box set includes a special Director's Cut disc that features a short "Kodak Moment" drama taken from the TV series.

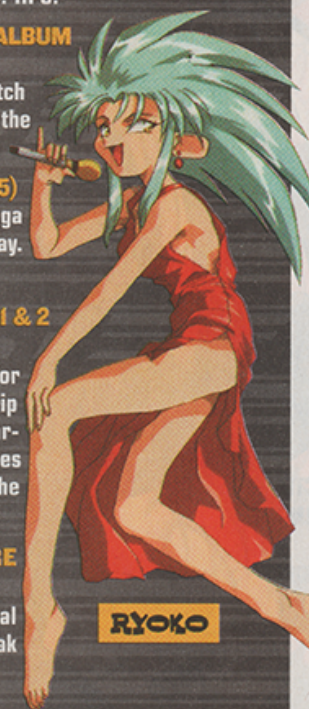
TENCHI MUYO! TV VOL. 1 & 2 (1995)

Vol. 1 details Mihoshi's domestic life on Earth, while vol. 2 has a drama set back when Mihoshi and Kiyone were full-time GP officers.

TOKYO UNIVERSE

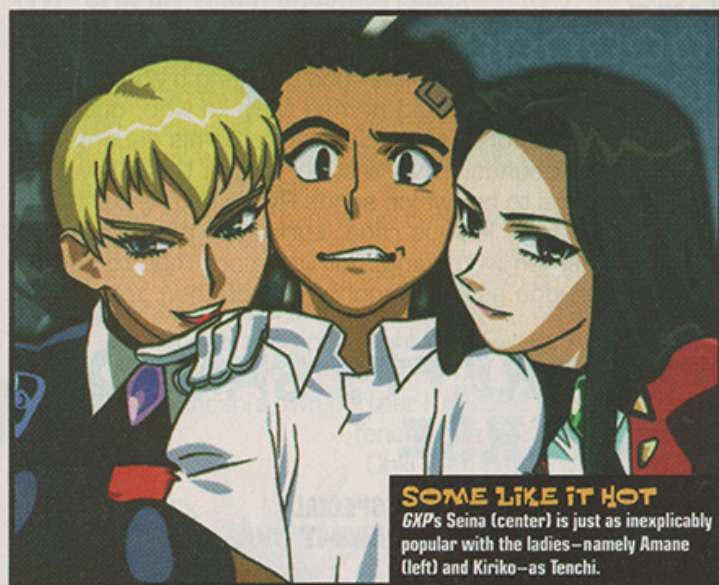
NEW NO NEED FOR TENCHI MUSIC VOL. 1 & 2 (1997)

Includes themes and BGM for *Tenchi In Tokyo* and a special drama entitled "How to Win Tenchi's Heart." A second CD features more BGM and a follow-up series of drama tracks. ■ AA



RYOKO

Meanwhile, fanatics should hunt for 1994's *Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki 101 Secrets*, as it's the only place to find out what happened to Tenchi's cat, learn how a bunch of alien girls can even talk with one another (it has to do with a "language field") and why Mihoshi never undoes her pony-tail (she'd lose her memory if she did).



SOME LIKE IT HOT
GXP's Seina (center) is just as inexplicably popular with the ladies—namely Amane (left) and Kiriko—as Tenchi.

[6] TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI OVA 3
Episodes 14-19 (2003-2005, FUNimation)

A mysterious warrior summoned by Tokimi has reached Earth with a mission to observe and not interfere. Meanwhile, the Masaki household gets a surprise visitor that brings Tenchi literally to tears. Things get crazier when more visitors from the Juraian royal family arrive—including a few familiar faces from *Tenchi Muyo! GXP*—and a new face, Noike, Mihoshi's former partner and Tenchi's newly announced fiancée!

Although Kajishima had stated in previous pre-GXP interviews that Tenchi would finally "choose" one of the girls, the series producers have since stated that this will definitely not occur in the third OVA. Gyp!

[6+] TENCHI MUYO! NO UCHIIWAI OVA
(2003, unlicensed)

This DVD consists of an intro to the third OVA, staff interviews, information on other *Tenchi* projects and a four-part radio drama involving the *Tenchi GXP* cast that chronicles Seina's adventures in space through the end of the series.

[7] TENCHI MUYO! GXP
(2002, FUNimation)

Set a year after the events portrayed in the third OVA series, *GXP* chronicles the adventures of unlucky 15-year-old Seina Yamada as he strives to become an officer in the Galaxy Police after officer Amane Kaunaq's patrol ship came crashing into the lake behind Tenchi's house, resulting in a massive tidal wave that engulfed Seina. As fate would have it, Seina's bad luck eventually turns out to be his greatest asset. He is given his own command as the captain of the decoy ship, the Kamidake. After a short stop-over on Earth with the Tenchi gang in

episode 17, Seina's knack for attracting pirates is put to the ultimate test when former GP officer, now quasi-pirate, Seiryō constructs a massive ship filled with lucky objects... it's Seina's final test before fulfilling his destiny!

[8] TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI OVA 4 AND SAINT KNIGHT STORY (unproduced)

Creator Kajishima has said that the third OVA would conclude the "first chapter" of the Tenchi saga and has suggested that a fourth series would take place after the "Choushin War"—the showdown between three goddesses: Lady Tokimi, Washu and Tsunami. In the same interview Kajishima mentioned a project that has been simmering on the back burner for years involving Tenchi's half-brother in an alternate universe where humans pilot magically powered mecha.

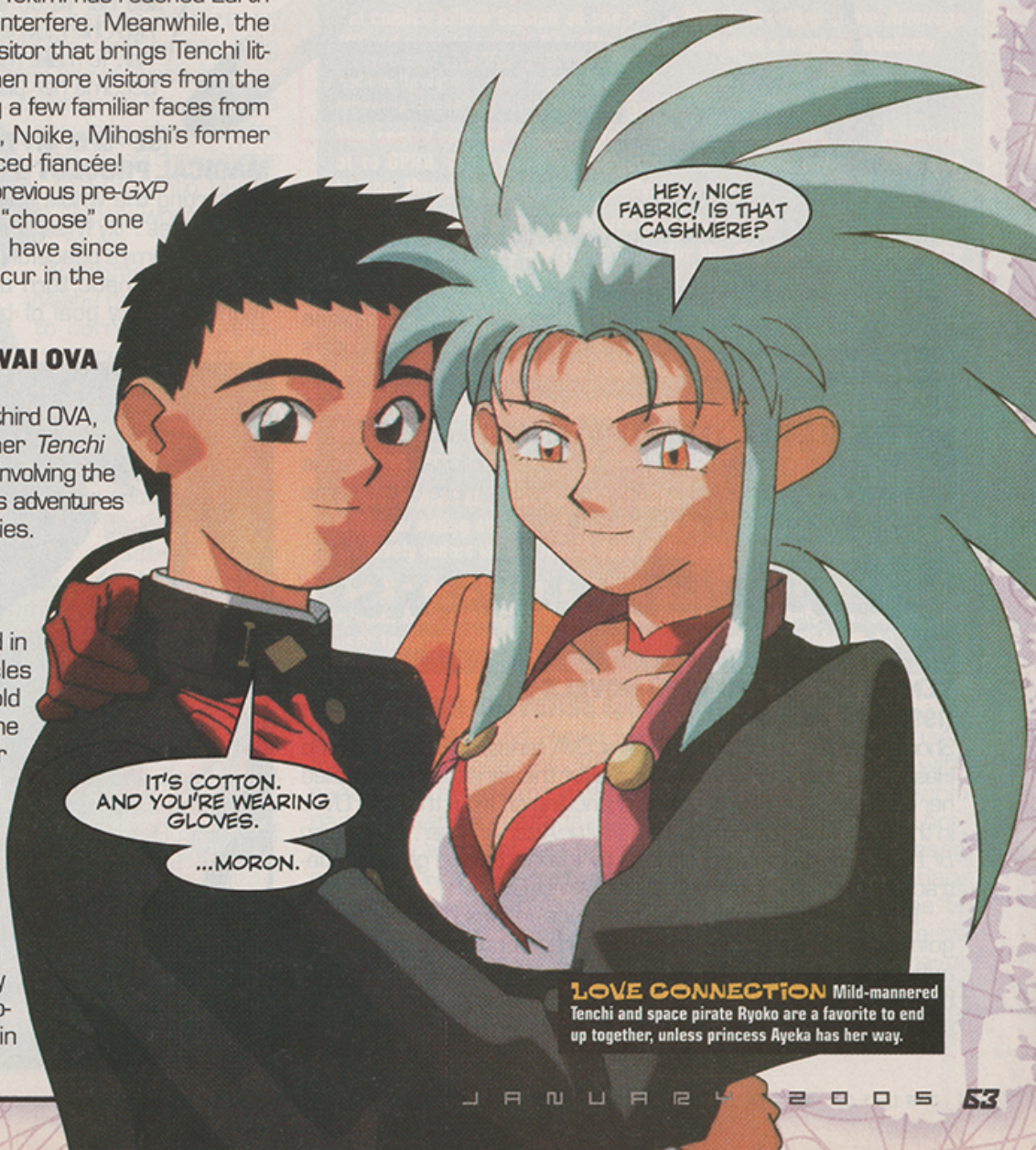
THE MANGA UNIVERSE

[MI—DIVERGENCE FROM OVA 1]

NO NEED FOR TENCHI! (1993-2000, VIZ)

Following the release of OVA episode 6, Hitoshi Okuda was tapped to continue the adventures of the *Tenchi* gang. While he's added elements from later *Tenchi* releases, events portrayed in the manga have no bearing on canon OVA continuity.

The first two volumes focus on the arrival of Minagi, a dead ringer for Ryoko who develops amnesia after attacking the Tenchi group. Volume 3 introduces Sasami as Pretty Sammy



LOVE CONNECTION Mild-mannered Tenchi and space pirate Ryoko are a favorite to end up together, unless princess Ayeka has her way.



CUTE-Y CALL Sasami was deemed cute enough to spin off into her own exceedingly silly magical girl series.

second movie with Kiyone contemplating her life in the post-Christmas Tenchi household. In the final volume, *Dreamscape*, Tenchi is left to decide where he and his baby girl, Mayuka, belong, and with whom.

[N2] TENCHI THE MOVIE 2: DAUGHTER OF DARKNESS (1997, Pioneer)

Based on Ms. Hasegawa's *Manatsu no Eve* novel, the second *Tenchi* feature revolves around the gang trying to unlock the mystery of a young girl named Mayuka who, out of the blue, appears before Tenchi claiming to be his daughter. As absurd as it sounds, DNA testing proves that Mayuka is who she claims to be, which sends Ryoko and Ayeka into an even further fit of jealous rage. Lurking in the darkness is Yuzuha, a demon who wants nothing more than to settle a 700-year grudge against Tenchi's grandfather, Yoshio.

THE PRETTY SAMMY UNIVERSE

[S1—SPIN-OFF FROM MIHOSHI SPECIAL] MAGICAL GIRL PRETTY SAMMY OVA (1995-1997, Pioneer)

In this three-episode OVA, grade school student Sasami Kawaii has been chosen to be a Magical Girl by Tsunami of the Magical Kingdom of Juraihelm. There's just one problem; Sasami is just too embarrassed that her friends might see her to do a proper job and not even her guide, Ryo-Ohki (now a talking male rabbit!), can hope to sway her. To make matters worse, her best friend Misao has become her ultimate rival—Pixy Misa!

[S2—SPIN-OFF FROM PRETTY SAMMY] MAGICAL PROJECT S (1996-1997, Pioneer)

Restarting the whole silly premise, this 26-episode TV incarnation sees Pixy Misa trying to put a wrench into Magical Girl Pretty Sammy's peaceful plans, but halfway through, the series takes a dramatic turn after Sammy actually accomplishes Tsunami's lofty goal of bringing peace to the world. *Tenchi*

before spending the next three volumes assisting the lovely Princess Asahi in her quest to find her father Takebe. The series concludes with a two-parter where Ayeka is kidnapped by a villain dead-set on brainwashing her. 2003's stand-alone *Tenchi Muyo! Sasami Stories* is simply a reprinting of Okuda's best Sasami tales.

[M2] THE ALL-NEW TENCHI MUYO! (2001-present, VIZ)

Picking up with a new title, Hitoshi Okuda's follow-up series is actually still being released in Japan and offers more of the same antics seen previously in the manga series.

THE NOVEL UNIVERSE

[N1—DIVERGENCE FROM OVA 1] TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI NOVELS (1993-1998, unlicensed)

Shortly after the conclusion of the first OVA series, scriptwriter Naoko Hasegawa saw a different outcome for the series and translated her vision into a series of novels branching off from the sixth OVA. In the first of her 13 novels, *One Visitor After Another: Hexagram of Love*, the gang is introduced to Kiyone before getting side-tracked in a two-volume recap of the first OVA.

The next two-parter, *Tenchi's Gone Insane?!*, sees Tenchi going off the deep end over the girls' continually escalating antics—this time involving the bathroom—and being attacked by the space pirate Seiran and subsequently captured by the Queen of Night. Volume 11 picks up after the events of the



LIGHT SABER DUEL Tenchi and his fearsome Light Hawk Wings take on Mayuka (left) and the villainous Yuzuha (right) in the second *Tenchi* flick.

characters do crop up every so often, but their appearances are few and far between.

THE TV UNIVERSE

[TVI—SPIN-OFF FROM MIHOSHI SPECIAL]

TENCHI UNIVERSE Episodes I-10 (1995, Pioneer)

In 1995, AIC unleashed a 26-episode retelling of the first OVA series directed by Hiroshi Negishi with a slew of new characters. The result was *Tenchi Universe*; a series told completely as a flashback where there is virtually no doubt that Tenchi chooses Ryoko in the end.

The first story arc begins on Earth when scatter-brained GP officer Mihoshi shoots down Ryoko, wanted space pirate, and the two become stranded. Princess Ayeka arrives after investigating Mihoshi's distress signal and gets stranded herself after a massive space-fight with Ryoko. Ayeka's sister, Sasami, Ryo-Ohki, a demon version of Washu, and Mihoshi's own partner Kiyone all show up to make Tenchi's life hell. Ryoko and Ryo-Ohki even get a rival in the form of the bounty hunter Nagi and her white cabbit Ken-Ohki.

[TV2] TENCHI UNIVERSE Episodes 11-13 (1995, Pioneer)

Based on the first Ryo-Ohki CD special, *Time and Space Adventures* chronicles the gang as they traverse a series of bizarre alternate realities resulting from one of Washu's inventions going haywire. The resulting chaos shifts the *Tenchi* crew (minus Washu) into feudal Japan, where Tenchi must battle a demonic Ryoko. As Washu desperately tries to correct the mess, the scene shifts to Kiyone as she arrives in a port town where she hopes to start life anew, sans Mihoshi. One quantum leap later and the gang find themselves at school in the magical world of Pretty Sammy where Ayeka and Ryoko get "hot and heavy."

Episode 13 wraps up the little misadventure, but not before we get to see Tenchi and Mihoshi married with Sasami as their child, and one final world where Ryoko and Tenchi are the Bonnie and Clyde of 1930s America.

POLICE ACTION The more serious Kiyone is a TV universe-only character, and is frequently infuriated by inept partner Mihoshi.

NO NEED FOR GAMES!

ALL THE VIDEO GAMES OF TENCHI'S UNIVERSES

OVA UNIVERSE

TENCHI MUYO! RPG (1995)

In this short RPG for the SNES, monsters attack the Tenchi house, and Sasami is kidnapped by mad scientist Kusumi.

TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI (1995)

This PC Engine (TurboGrafx 16 in the U.S.) game opens right after OVA 7 follows Tenchi through one embarrassing scrape after the other.

TENCHI MUYO! FX: DISC 1 (1996)

The "Here Comes Hakua!" digital comic for the PC-FX takes place during the lull after the first OVA, as Galaxy Police officer Hakua joins the cast for a little fun on Earth.

RYO-OHKI

TV UNIVERSE

TENCHI MUYO! RENZA HITSUYOU (1997)

A puzzle game similar to *Tetris* and *Puyo Puyo* for the Sega Saturn. Kiyone is an active participant and Lady Achika is unlockable.

PRETTY SAMMY UNIVERSES

MAGICAL GIRL PRETTY SAMMY 01 & 02 (1996)

Released for the PlayStation, Sega Saturn and PC, these two-episode digital comics follow Sasami as she fights Naomi Armitage (from *Armitage III*) and tries to rescue Pixy Misa before she gets a magical lobotomy.

OTHER

TENCHI MUYO! FX: DISC 2 (1996)

This sequel entitled "Crashing Into Kiyone!" follows Hakua crash-landing at to GPHQ. After being put on suspension without pay, she runs into Kiyone, throwing it out of continuity.

TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI GOKURAKU (1995)

A multimedia gallery and trivia game for the Sega Saturn based on the first OVA series.

TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI GOKURAKU 2 (1996)

This PC sequel is a fun-filled *Zelda*-esque RPG featuring the *Tenchi* cast in a medieval ages setting as they square off against Kagato once more.

TENCHI MUYO! MIMIRI ONSEN YUKEMURI NO TABI (1996)

Featuring both Kiyone and Pretty Sammy, the basic plot involves the girls learning about a hot spring on an alien planet.

TENCHI MUYO! TOKO MUYO (1996)

A *Tenchi* dating sim for PC. Answer the burning question, "Which of the six lovely ladies would Tenchi date if they all went to school with him?"

TENCHI MUYO! IN POCKET (1997)

A hand-held product similar to Tamagotchi virtual pets that allows the user to hatch, raise and care for their very own Ryo-Ohki! ■ AA

[TV3] TENCHI UNIVERSE Episodes 14-26 (1995, Pioneer)

Ayeka, Sasami and Ryoko have been accused of treason by the new leader of Jurai and are arrested. Even with security at an all-time high across the cosmos, the *Tenchi* gang somehow manages to navigate Juraian space. Acting on the advice of Tenchi's grandfather, Katsuhito, the gang makes its way to a graveyard planet to revive the legendary knights Azaka and Kamidake—the humanoid versions of Ayeka's own guardians. It is also here that everyone learns Katsuhito is actually Yoshio, the rightful heir to the Juraian throne! Having been revealed for the imposter he is, Kagato shows himself and throws down the gauntlet. The *Tenchi* household falls apart, but the end is a treat to behold.



BLAST FROM THE PAST Although Tenchi's mom Achika (center) packs a punch in the TV universe, the novel names someone else as his mom.

[TV4] TENCHI THE MOVIE: TENCHI MUYO! IN LOVE (1996, Pioneer)

Picking up several months after the end of the TV series, the merciless criminal Kain has escaped from sub-space, decimated Galaxy Police Headquarters and has now set his sights on Earth. In the present, Tenchi starts to vanish from existence! Realizing something must be happening in the past,

Washu straps the gang in and sends them back to the year 1970 where Tenchi must keep an eye out for the arrival of Kain while ensuring that his mother and father, Achika and Nobuyuki, get together. Hiroshi Negishi wrote a novelization of the film that changes a few things.

[TV4A] TENCHI MUYO! RYO-OHKI'S DAY (1997, Pioneer)

In 1997, Pioneer branched out and produced an American-made *Tenchi Muyo!* comic entitled "Ryo-Ohki's Day." The six-issue series picks up as Cabbit Hunter Rob sets his sights on Ryo-Ohki and Ryoko gets an unwanted admirer, raising their wanted level to A-1 status.

[TV5] TENCHI MUYO! IN LOVE 2: TENCHI FOREVER (1999, Pioneer)

In this third and final film (and confusingly named as the sequel to the first movie while ignoring the second), Tenchi literally vanishes for six months. When he finally resurfaces, he has long hair, has lost his virginity (to Haruna—the young woman he has been living with all this time) and is now an aspiring artist.

Unaware of this development, Ryoko and Ayeka cannot stop blaming themselves for Tenchi leaving, since it was their fight that caused him to run off in the first place. They have even moved to Tokyo and have been working at a restaurant to make ends meet as they continue their search. Sasami has returned with Azaka and Kamidake to Jurai to comb the databanks and learns of a woman that Yoshio was forbidden to marry many millennia ago... a woman named Haruna. There's a strange connection between Tenchi's Haruna and Yoshio, as well as an even stranger tie to the camellia tree Tenchi stumbled across six months ago.

Hiroshi Negishi released novels of both films, one of which, 1999's *Eternal Memory*, features an original manga story chronicling Sasami's adventures on Jurai as she and a strange girl named Izumi search for a way to bring Tenchi back.

THE TOKYO UNIVERSE

[TT—SPIN-OFF FROM TENCHI UNIVERSE] TENCHI IN TOKYO (1997, Pioneer)

Strangely enough, the 26-episode *Tenchi in Tokyo* at first seems like it follows on from *Tenchi Universe*, but the show's vastly different take on the girls' origins throws this series in a universe all its own.

Here, Tenchi goes to college and gets a girlfriend, Sakuya. The girls go psycho. Ryoko and Washu are two space pirates in cahoots that are shot down over Earth. Rather than be caught, Ryoko uses an artifact she stole to transform into a devilish beast and is only taken down after Tenchi's crystal necklace transforms into a massive glowing sword. The second half of the series features a very emotional look at Tenchi's relationship with Sakuya as the Tenchi household begins to come apart at the seams. Sekijima Mayori—the person responsible for ensuring overall structure of the series—novelized the whole series as *Shin Tenchi Muyo!*



CROSSING THE BORDER

FOR TENCHI'S FURTHER ADVENTURES, YOU HAVE TO WATCH ANOTHER SHOW!

Think this is it? No way! If you check out the 14-episode *Dual! Parallel Trouble Adventure* by *Tenchi Muyo!* co-creator Masaki Kajishima, you'll notice a tie-in or two. Kajishima has gone on the record as saying *Tenchi* and *Dual!* (about a robot-piloting boy named Kazuki Yotsuga that can see events happening in two universes at once) are connected, although he's kept mum on exactly how. Released by Pioneer, *Dual!* confusingly included cameos by non-OVA continuity characters Kiyone, Ramia and Misao (from episode 14). Plus, if you watch *Tenchi Muyo! GXP*, look out for a cameo by Kazuki's mecha! ■ AA



GETBACK TO

By Miguel A. L. Esquivel

Everyone loses something at one point or another. That's why places have Lost & Found boxes—and anime has the GetBackers. This duo specializes in retrieving lost or stolen items, but otaku have found both the ADV's anime (and the manga, thanks to animation from Studio Deen of *Read or Die* and *Fruits Basket* fame. So how do the GetBackers find their clients? Well, usually their clients find them, but that's no excuse not to advertise! Check out this flyer we found on a public bulletin board.

TRANSPORTER FOR HIRE

NO QUESTIONS ASKED

Do you need something moved without any unnecessary attention or risk? Our highly professional drivers will make sure your cargo will arrive where you want it to, when you want it to, in its original condition. We'll never ask about the contents of your package. For more information, call Makuruma Gouzou, Himiko Kudou or Kuro'udo Akabane for more information at 84-5555-4000.



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We've got all the GetBackers adventures on DVD, but YOU can get them, too—for cheap! Grab your copy from ADV Films right away, or check us out behind the Honky Tonk cafe for—ahem—discreet viewings.

MISSING SOMETHING SPECIAL? Then you need THE GETBACKERS

With an (almost) 100% success rate, we get back what shouldn't be gone. As long as the price is right, we'll get the job done! We're on sale now, for a limited time only: **50% off!** It's a bargain!



Loyal to friends and super-cool, **Ginji Amano** has the ability to generate and control thousands of volts of electricity from his body, like an electric eel. Hardened and honed by the harsh streets of the Infinite Fortress, the former Thunder Emperor and Ice King of Shinjuku is also really popular with the hotties!



The even more handsome **Mido Ban**'s got the Evil Eye... know what I mean? The mystical Jagan creates horrifying nightmares that only last a minute, but his powerful "snake bite" grip can crush anything with 300 lbs. of force! The only thing Mido does better than fighting is lovin' the ladies...and GetBacking!

On the streets, we're known as the "Invincible Duo," so don't be fooled by imitations! With an extensive information network backing us up and our suped-up Volkswagen Bug, there's nothing Ginji and I can't get back quickly and safely...so what are you waiting for? We have to eat too, y'know!

Please Help My Daughter
Her name is Yamamura Rika, and she's my daughter! I've been looking for her for 2 years! She was kidnapped by the Yakuza when I couldn't afford to pay my business loans. I can't pay much now, but I'll work my rear off to get the rest of your money. I just can't wait to see her. I need to tell her I'm sorry. If you know of her whereabouts, I can be found in a cardboard box near the junkyard.



—Yamamura

BASICS

Tokyo Foundation
Classical Music
ke to present

An Evening With
MADOKA OTOWA
World-renowned violinist and "Ear of God"



with
violinist Akuzu Junseke



Spend an evening with the classics! The legendary Madoka Otowa, known for overcoming her blindness to become one of the top concert performers in the world as well as her ancient, priceless Stradivarius violin, graces Tokyo with a concert of baroque and classical favorites, alongside her excellent fellow violinist Akuzu Junseke.

THURSDAY 8 P.M.
GINKA'S NIPPONIC HALL
Tickets: ¥2,500 yen to 78 yen

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS BOY?



LAST SEEN: 04-10
AGE: 11 months
HAIR: Black
EYES: Dark Brown
Parents Honyiro and Jankei Yony are willing to pay any amount reward for the return of their only son in unharmed condition. Hony is the disinherited son of Kiruta Gohon, chairman of the international multimillion-dollar Kiruta Group conglomerate.

EMERGENCY BLOOD DRIVE ALL OH-BLOODTYPES NEEDED!



An emergency blood drive will be held tomorrow at the Civic Center from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. All type donors will be welcomed, but we ask that anyone with the OH-bloodtype—which is so rare only 1 in 10,000 people have it—to please stop in. Your blood is necessary to save the life of 12-year-old Yomei Jinpan, who is currently in critical condition after an accident.

Please come and donate blood, especially if you have this very special blood type. Juice and cookies will be served.

Help

girl's life!

If anyone has found a small cat character doll keychain, please let me know about it! It's my most cherished thing in the world, and is my last memory of my mother in heaven. Reward available—I'll do anything to pay you! I last saw it with a police officer in some alleyway near the karaoke bar in Shinjuku. If found, find Natsumi Mizuki at the Honky Tonk Café as soon as possible, or leave a message there! Thanks so much!!!



HONKY TONK CAFÉ
Best pizza in town!



PIZZA

| | Regular | Sicilian |
|------------|---------|----------|
| Cheese | ¥ 850 | ¥1025 |
| 1 Topping | 950 | 1125 |
| 2 Toppings | 1000 | 1175 |
| 3 Toppings | 1125 | 1300 |
| 4 Toppings | 1250 | 1425 |
| 5 Toppings | 1500 | 1675 |

Choice of Toppings:

Extra Cheese • Sausage • Pepperoni
Meatballs • Bacon • Broccoli • Spinach
Olives • Mushrooms • Olives • Garlic
Hot Peppers • Sweet Peppers
Eggplant • Anchovies

SLICES

| | Regular | Sicilian |
|--------------------|---------|----------|
| White | ¥ 115 | ¥ 125 |
| Chicken & Tomato | 150 | 200 |
| Each item on Slice | 200 | 40 |

GOURMET PIZZAS

| | |
|------------------|--------|
| Chicken & Tomato | ¥ 1550 |
| Stuffed Pizza | 1550 |
| White Pizza | 1100 |
| Baked Ziti | 1550 |

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Eat in or take out a heaping load of our specialty, the best pizza in the city! Prices that won't break the bank, and a great place to hang out and meet friends!

DELIVERY OR PICK-UP
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Homestyle setting with a gourmet flavor!

PASTAS

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Spaghetti | ¥ 500 |
| Ziti | 500 |
| Ravioli | 575 |
| Manicotti | 575 |
| Stuffed Shells | 575 |
| Baked Ziti | 575 |
| Baked Ravioli | 625 |

Side Orders

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Meatballs or Sausage | ¥ 200 |
| Mozzarella Sticks reg (6) | 375 |
| Mozzarella Sticks lge (9) | 450 |

DINNERS

| | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Chicken Parmigiana | ¥ 700 |
| Eggplant Parmigiana | 700 |
| Mussels (hot or mild) | 800 |



HOT HEROES

| | | | |
|------------------|-------|------|-------|
| Meatball | ¥ 400 | Parm | ¥ 450 |
| Sausage | 400 | Parm | 450 |
| Veal Patty | 400 | Parm | 450 |
| Chicken | 400 | Parm | 450 |
| Eggplant | 400 | Parm | 450 |
| Sausage & Pepper | | | 450 |

SALADS

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Tossed Salad | ¥ 300 |
| Chef's Salad | 400 |
| Antipasto Salad | 450 |

BUT if you're looking for
The GetBackers forget T!!
Use The side service
entrance! And no fighting
allowed

The 'Anime Insider' Preview of

Alichino

**Be Careful
What You Wish For...**

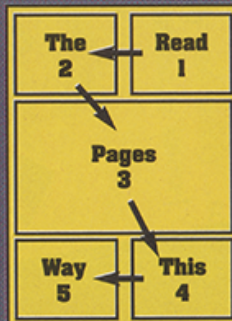
What would you trade for a wish come true? Anything? How about *everything*? The dangers of desire come to life in TOKYOPOP's *Alichino*, a haunting and highly anticipated manga series premiering in TOKYOPOP's 100% Authentic Manga lineup later this winter. This stunning and bittersweet tale is the first full series crafted by Kouyu Shurei, an award-winning illustrator and doujinshi artist with an eye for gothic elegance. "At TOKYOPOP, we're always looking for new talent," says *Alichino* editor Tim Beedle. "Kouyu Shurei is a relative newcomer, which makes *Alichino* a very exciting project."

Alichino focuses on magical beings of the same name, impossibly beautiful creatures that can both take any shape and grant any wish. But with every wish comes a price, and these soul-absorbing entities bring danger with their magic—and for none so terribly as Tsugiri, a human tied to *Alichino* fate. Tsugiri's very presence draws the creatures to his door, and his battle to discover and control his mysterious destiny highlights the pain of self-discovery and the cruelty of an unwanted fate.

"*Alichino* has so much going for it," says Beedle. "Astonishing art that's rich with detail and a gothic story that's teeming with love and loss." For those familiar with Japan's J-Rock and Gothic Lolita styles, Shurei's richly drawn cast is reminiscent of the strikingly beautiful men and women who grace Japanese musical media. "The characters are deep and complex," adds TOKYOPOP's *Alichino* adaptor Paul Morrissey, "and I'm taking great pains to make sure they are each given their appropriate voice."

The first volume of *Alichino* premieres in February of 2005 and will continue with a new volume every four months. TOKYOPOP promises select color pages within its release and a delicate handling of this fan-favorite title. Read on for an exclusive peek into the world of *Alichino*...and remember that beauty isn't always what it seems. ■ Lianne Sentar

IN THESE PAGES...



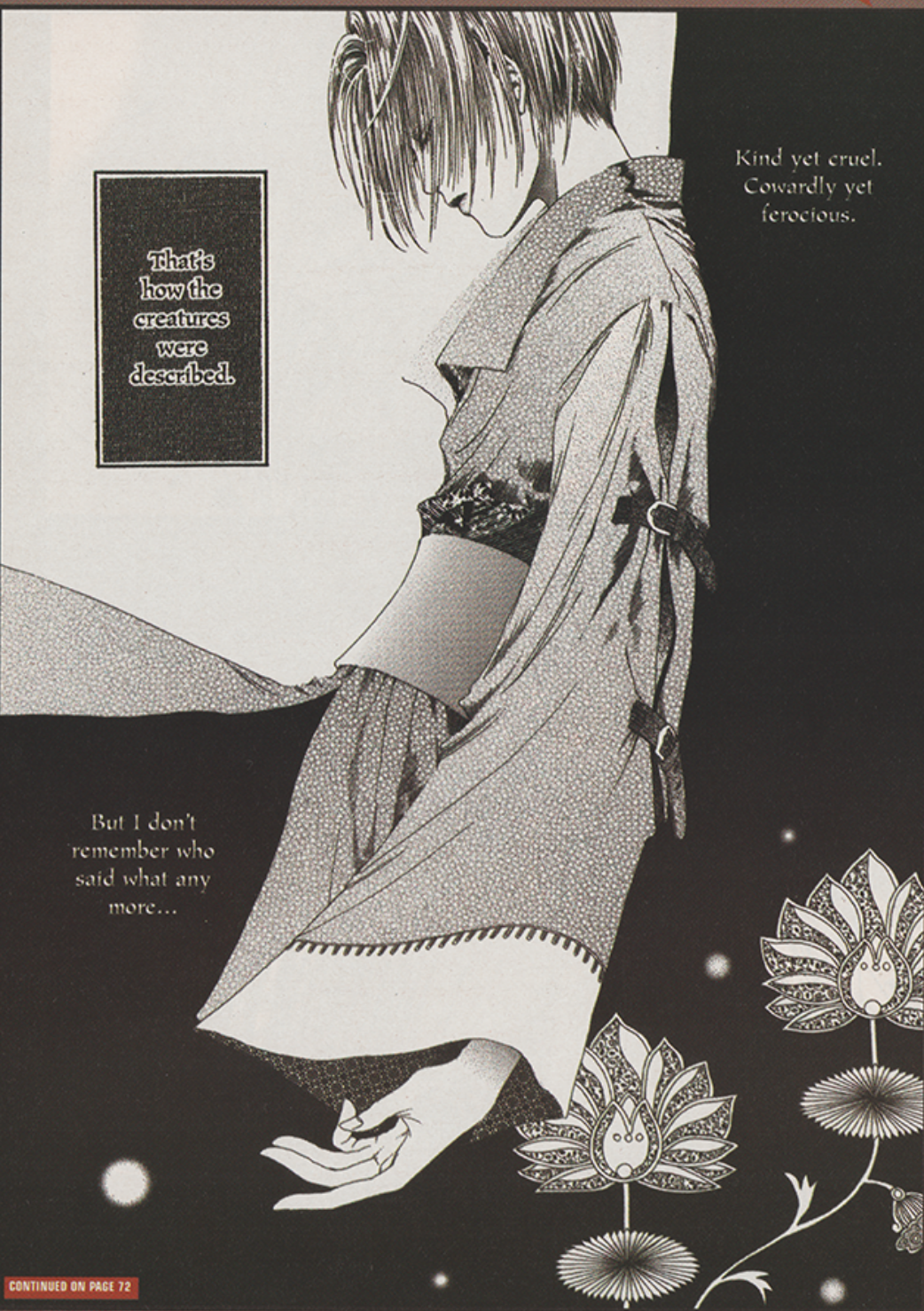
In these opening pages of the manga, Tsugiri is approached by a young woman who thinks he's an *Alichino*. Her brother has fallen into a strange coma after seeking the wish-granting creatures, and she hopes to find an *Alichino* connection and thus save her brother's life. What she doesn't realize is that Tsugiri's "connection" to the *Alichino* isn't something she should seek...

BE BEAUTIFUL Tsugiri and the cast of *Alichino* will put a spell on you.

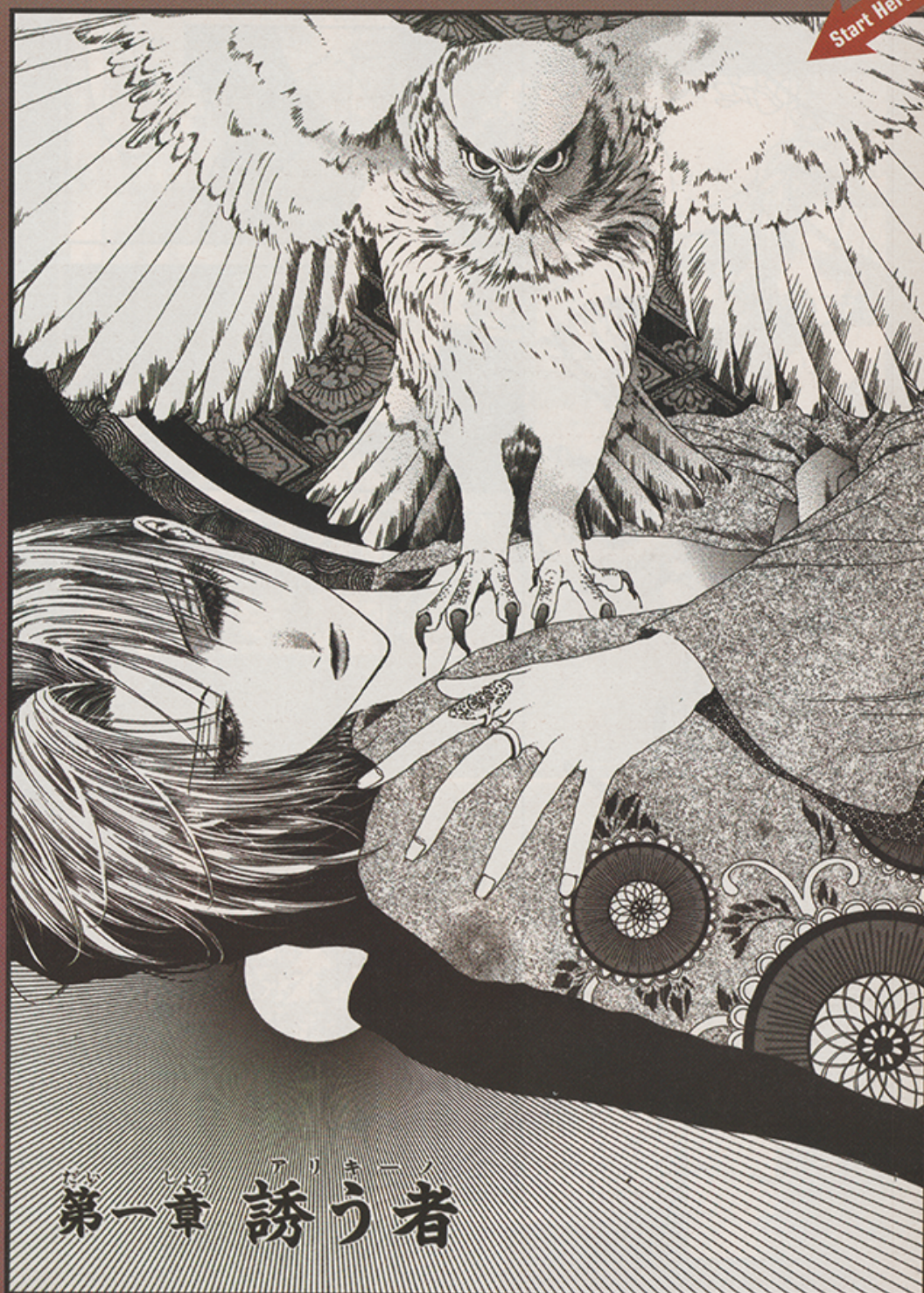
That's
how the
creatures
were
described.

Kind yet cruel.
Cowardly yet
ferocious.

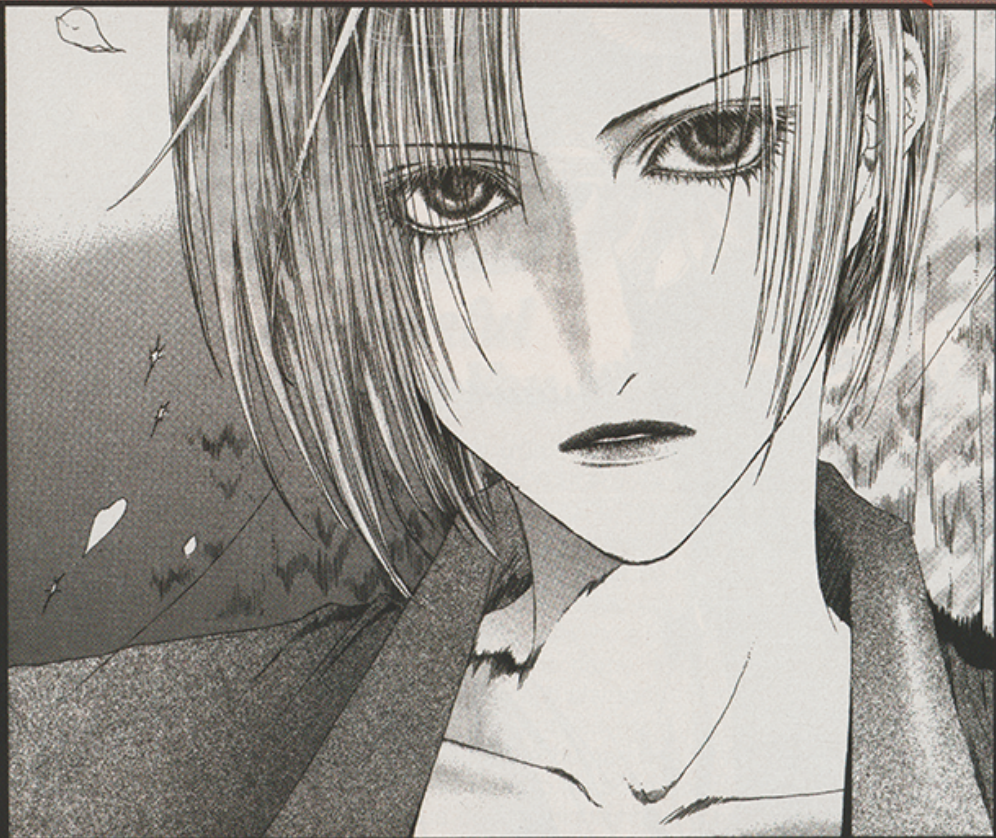
But I don't
remember who
said what any
more...



CONTINUED ON PAGE 72



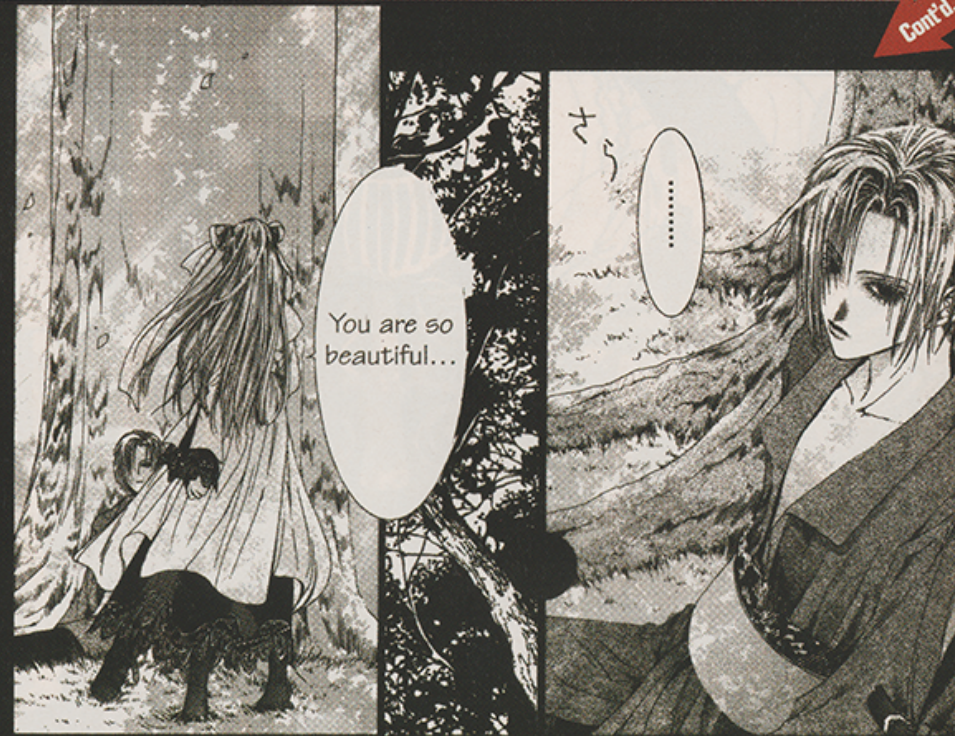
第一章 誘う者



An
Alichino
...

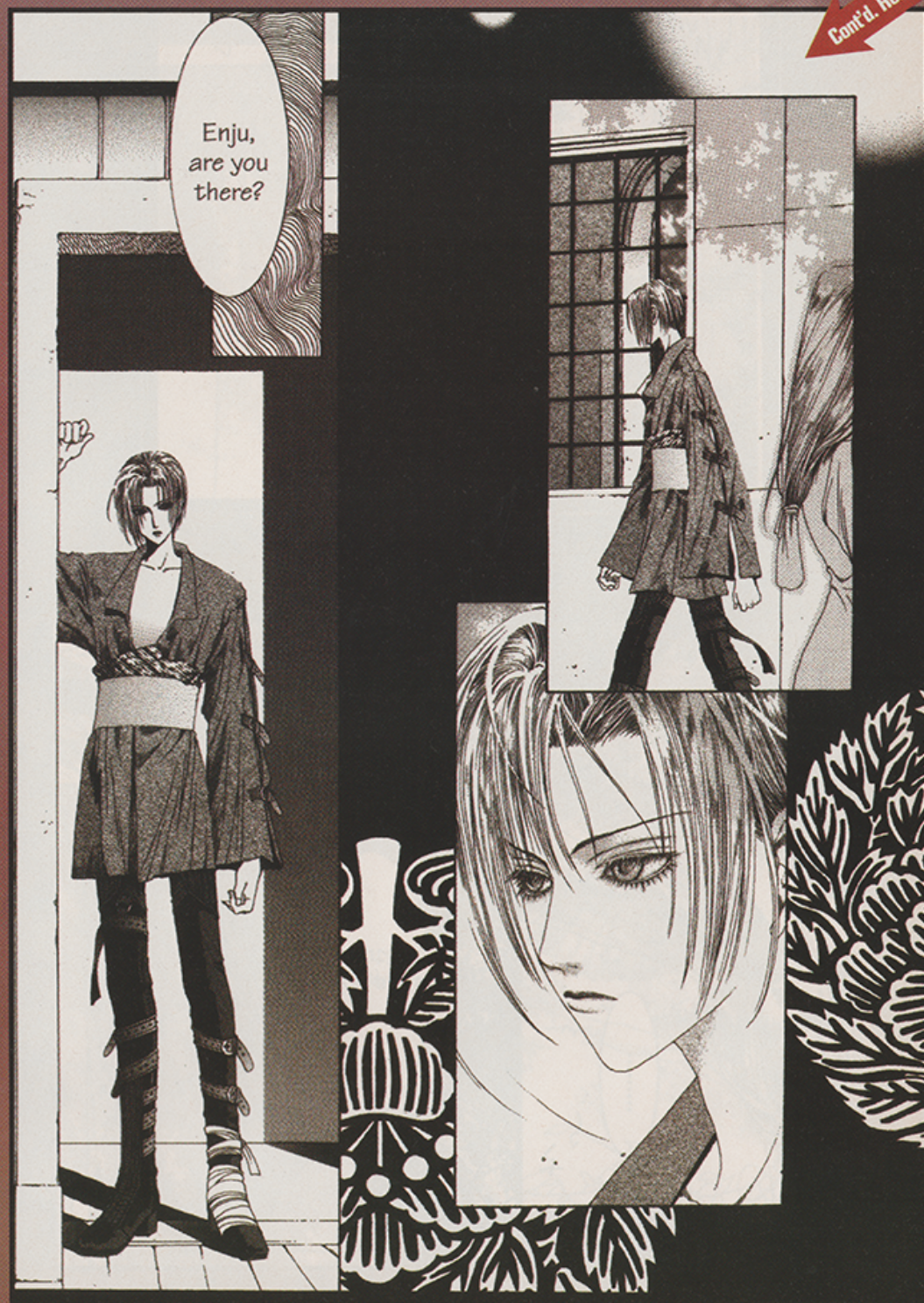
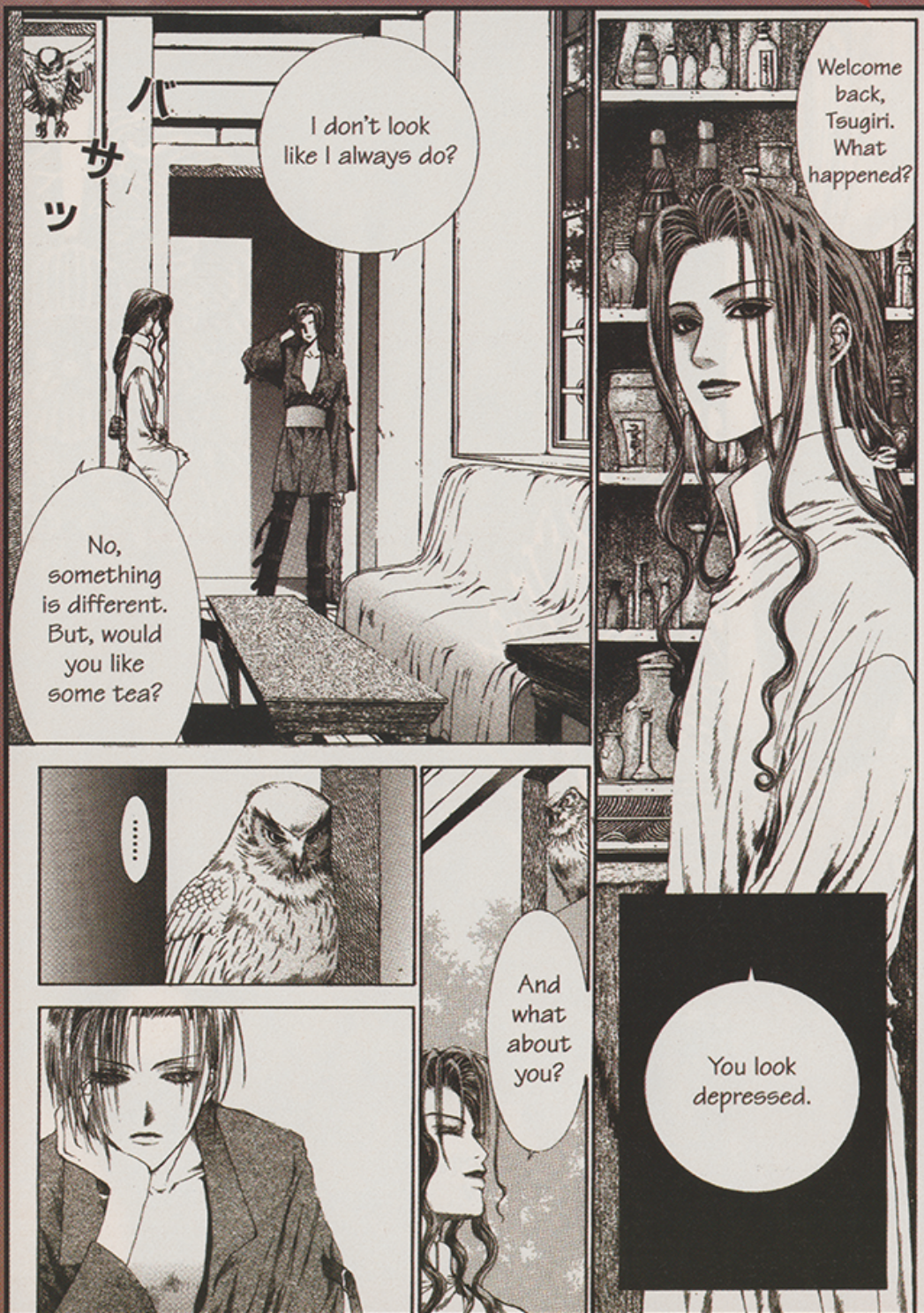
...Can grant any
wish you desire.
I've been searching...

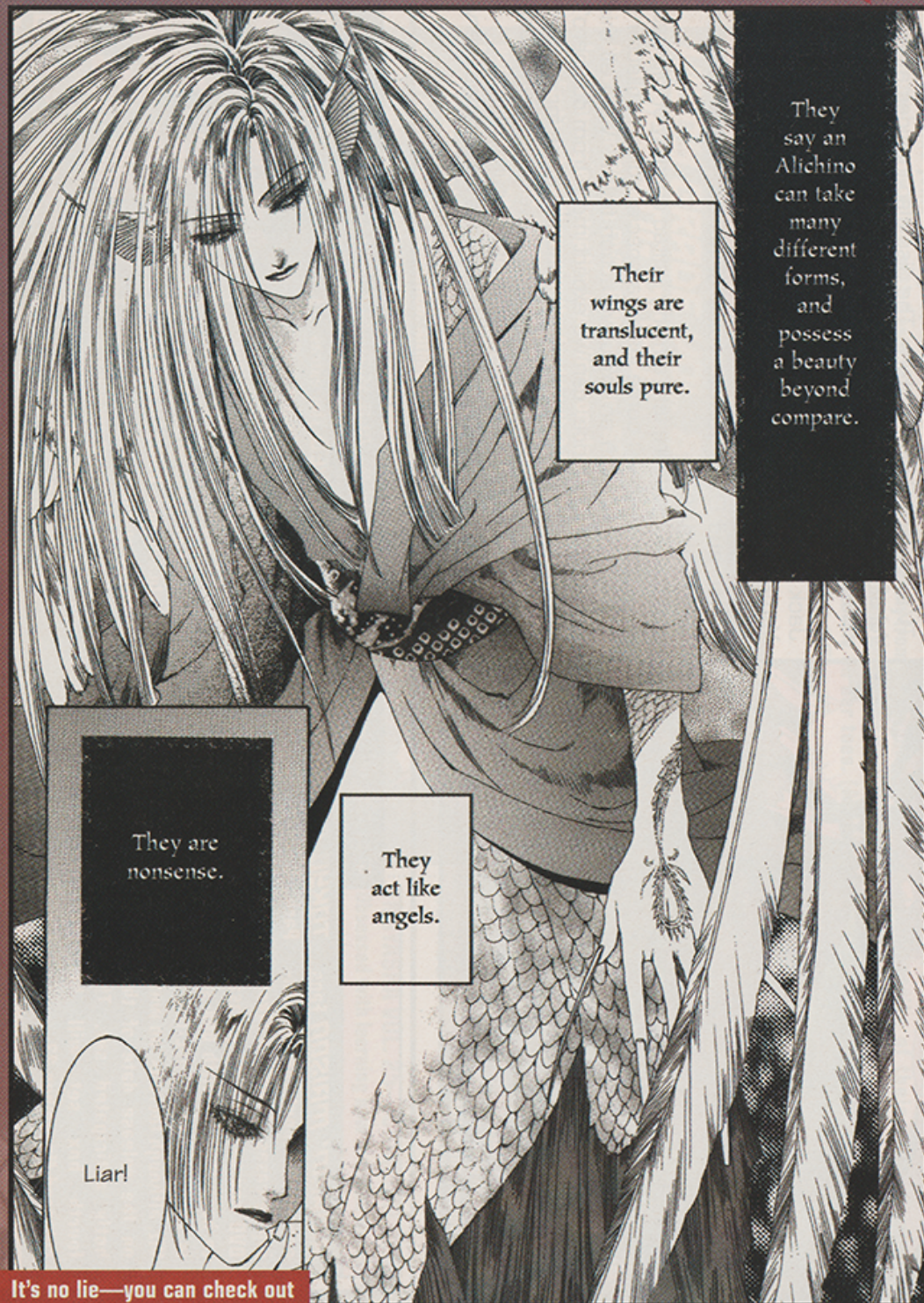
I'm only
human.



I thought
you were an
Alichino.







Their wings are translucent, and their souls pure.

They say an Alichino can take many different forms, and possess a beauty beyond compare.

They are nonsense.

They act like angels.

Liar!

It's no lie—you can check out more *Alichino* this February!



Again?

This morning, I met a girl who was looking for an Alichino.

Enju.

Yes?

Well ...

For many years,

people have sought Alichinos to grant their wishes

A long time ago, there were "Alichino Hunts."

These are the words of one who seeks.

But, if everyone's wishes were granted, no one would suffer.



BOX OF NINJAS

'NINJA SCROLL: THE SERIES' GETS THE ULTIMATE TREATMENT



His series might be over, but don't count Jubei Kibagami out yet.

Ninja Scroll: The Series, Madhouse Studio's blockbuster 13-episode extrapolation of the *Ninja Scroll* story made famous (and infamous) by the original movie, is getting the deluxe box set treatment from Urban Vision next spring. The *Ninja Scroll: The Series Ultimate Collection* box set will include all 13 original episodes, alongside a fourth disc overflowing with Jubei-related extras. It all comes in a brand-new art box plastered with original images created just for this release.

"We're all excited, of course!" says Urban Vision marketing coordinator, Robyn Mukai. "What we're making is more than a compilation of the already-released episodes."

The extras disc—an attractive bonus for fans who already own the original release—comes loaded with a rare behind-the-scenes peek at Madhouse, the animation powerhouse behind *Ninja Scroll* that also produced fan favorites like *X TV* and *Card Captor Sakura*. The disc also includes a handful of PC downloads and a trivia game, while the series itself comes with two separate commentary tracks. The first is a sit-down with the series' English-language director, Jack Fletcher, and the English-language producer, Sandee Yamamoto. The second involves the series' two lead voice actors, Dave Rasner, voice of demon-slaying swordsman Jubei, and Daisy Torme, voice of his attractive counterpart, Shigure.

For the hardcore fan, a highly limited quantity of *Ultimate Collection* sets will come inside a special edition collector's tin, packaged with an exclusive action figure. With all this Jubei hitting at once, can we expect more from our hero? "At this point, we don't have any concrete plans for another project," adds Mukai. "But seeing that everyone loves Jubei, you'll likely see more of him in the near future."

That's good news for us, and bad news for demons everywhere. ■ **Zac Bertschy**

EXTREME MAKEOVER
Jubei Kibagami offers a low-cost plastic surgery alternative.

FAST FORWARD

QUICK PEEKS AT THE NEXT BIG VIDEOS

AMAZIN' MAISON Fans concerned about the continuing releases of *Maison Ikkoku* DVD box sets will be pleased to hear that the fifth box set is currently in production at Viz, although there is no word on the release date of this hotly anticipated set. The fourth box set will be released November 23.

TOKYO-A-GO-GO Central Park Media has drastically lowered prices on a number of older discs, including fan favorite *Tokyo Babylon* (the precursor to *X TV*, also by powerhouse creators CLAMP). Since this disc has been discontinued, get it while it's hot! It's worthy of being in your collection.

APPLE JACKED The extras packaged with the collector's edition of the Japanese release of this month's *Appleseed* movie include two glossy books; one of photos and one of storyboards and production designs. Geneon is expected to release the movie on DVD in the U.S. next summer, but there is no word on the books being included. ■ **Summer Mullins**



APPLESEED THE MOVIE

ON THE SHELF

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR ANIME STORES THIS WINTER?

DECEMBER

AQUARIAN AGE VOL. 3

Success might not be all it's cracked up to be for Kyouta. His girlfriend goes insane with power, his two friends have become harsh music critics, and pop star Ryuusei finds something wrong with everything he does. (ADV, \$29.98)

THE DAICHIS VOL. 1

A family struggling with its jobs, school, and life in general suddenly finds itself on the front line defending the Earth from invading forces. (Geneon, \$24.95)

DRAGON BALL Z: CELL GAMES—SACRIFICE

Everyone gathers to make two wishes upon the Dragon Balls. The first is to bring back all of the people Cell killed. Bringing back Goku, however, would require a separate wish. Instead, the second wish is used to turn Android 18 into a human. (FUNimation, \$19.98)

EIKEN

After enrolling in the elite Zashono academy, Densuke joins the mysterious Eiken club. The club is filled with busty, bikini-clad women, but Densuke's only interest lies in the shy and beautiful Chiharu. (Media Blasters, \$19.99)

FIGHTING SPIRIT VOL. 3

Ippo's premier match against Oda finally concludes, leaving Ippo the undisputed winner. Following the match, Ippo faces off against Jason Oza in the Eastern Japan Rookie Championship Tournament. (Geneon, \$29.98)

GAD GUARD VOL. 4

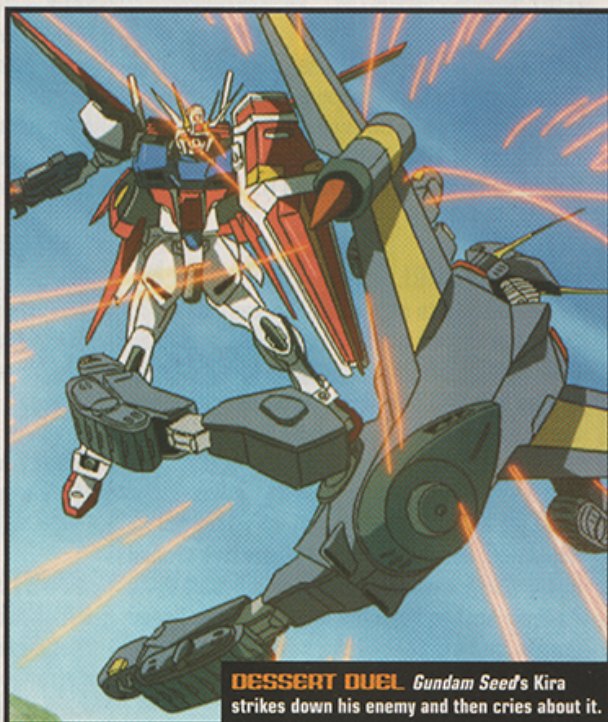
Everyone desires a gad, but could it really be a curse? A hit man has his sights on Katana, Aiko's father cares more about his gads than his daughter, and Catherine uses her friends to obtain one. (Geneon, \$29.98)

GETBACKERS VOL. 3

Ban and Ginji are forced to team up with beast master Shido, poison user Himiko, and the insane Dr. Jackal when their newest assignment forces them to travel into the deadly Limitless Fortress. (ADV, \$29.98)

GOKUSEN VOL. 2

Kumiko struggles to keep her double life a secret, especially from her brightest student, Shin. To make things worse, turf wars at school keep her constantly on her toes. (Media Blasters, \$29.95)



DESSERT DUEL *Gundam Seed's Kira strikes down his enemy and then cries about it.*

GUNDAM SEED VOL. 4

As Kira and crew are stuck in the desert, ZAFT plans a secret midnight strike. While Kira fights ZAFT ace Andy Waltfeld, PLANT argues about a daring strike of their own. (Bandai, \$24.95)

HANAUKYO MAID TEAM VOL. 1

When his mother dies, Taro Hanaukyo travels to Tokyo and inherits the Hanaukyo family estate. Taro will have his hands full with the current residents, who want nothing more than to fulfill Taro's every wish. (Geneon, \$29.98, w/box \$39.98)

INUYASHA VOL. 24: SEVERED IDENTITIES

Inuyasha, Kagome and the others chase after a faceless demon who's been terrorizing the countryside. He calls himself Muso, and Inuyasha makes a startling discovery about him: he's one of Naraku's demons! (Viz, \$24.95)

INUYASHA VOL. 25—CRIMSON BLADE

Obsessed with learning how to break Naraku's impenetrable barriers, Inuyasha travels to a remote village plagued by a horde of demon bats. Their leader, Taigokumaru, uses his granddaughter's abilities to shield their lair. (Viz, \$24.95)

KALEIDO STAR VOL. 6

Yuri continues to shine on stage, even while she and Sora compete to be Layla's partner. What neither of them suspects is that Layla's hiding a very serious injury! (ADV, \$29.98)

HOT PICK

KIDDY GRADE VOL. 8—EMERGING ANEW

November 30 on DVD, FUNimation, \$24.98

In the struggle to stop the *Deucalion* from destroying the Earth, who will survive the final battle? The final three episodes of *Kiddy Grade* wallow in the drama, but still find a little time for the show's trademark fanservice.

The combined forces of GOTT, the ES, and the clones come to bear on the *Deucalion*, although the real work will be done by the agents secretly infiltrating the ship. Alv and Dvergr confront Chevalier, who tricks Alv into the ship's Reception System Chamber and turns her into pure energy! Éclair and Lumière arrive only to discover that Chevalier's been shot—and that Alv has merged with the ship!

Alv repeats Chevalier's trick and traps Éclair and Lumière in an attempt to destroy them, and this pushes Lumière to realize her true powers. Dvergr helps Éclair and Lumière find the ship's weakness, but the destruction of the *Deucalion* remains tantalizingly out of reach to Lumière weakened powers...unless someone is willing to make a sacrifice. Family ties are revealed and tested, and the fate of the Earth hangs on the result of Éclair and Lumière's effort.

This startling conclusion to Gonzo's impressive series would be sure to please even without FUNimation's stellar dub; just in case. ■ SM



KAZE NO YOJIMBO VOL. 5

Mysterious murders cause panic among the residents of Kimujuku, especially when the blame is put on George. Can he survive when the entire city turns its guns on him? (Bandai, \$29.98)

KNIGHTS OF THE ZODIAC VOL. 9

Shiryu heads to China in hopes of recovering his sight. Seiya travels through Jamel in search of the Water of Life, but he'll have to fight the Knight of Tarantula to possess it! (ADV, \$14.98)

LAST EXILE VOL. 7

Delphine tries to gain complete control of the Exile, but Sophia gives Claus, Lavie, and Alvis their final orders: fly through the Grand Stream to stop her. Will Delphine's hopes of controlling the Exile finally be destroyed? (Geneon, \$29.98)

MEZZO VOL. 2

Gangsters, robots, and serial killers lurk around every corner while Asami and the DSA team do their best to keep the streets clean. Asami learns quickly that looks can be deceiving. (ADV, \$29.98)

PEACEMAKER VOL. 2

Tetsu continues to struggle with his horrible past and his lackluster presence as Hijikata's servant. Attacks within the city dwindle, and the Shinsengumi suspects their enemies are plan-

ning one unified attack. (ADV, \$29.98)

POPOTAN VOL. 1

Three magical sisters—Ai, Mai and Mii—travel the world with their unusual maidservant in an enchanted, dimension-hopping house. (Geneon, \$24.98)

RAVE MASTER VOL. 3

Elie remembers a bit of her past when they stumble upon a village that hasn't seen the sun in weeks. Could the Thunder Man be one of the Shadow Guards and could defeating him help bring Elie's memory back? (TOKYOPOP, \$14.99)

REQUIEM FROM THE DARKNESS VOL. 2

Momosuke's forced to rest at a stranger's house and discovers that the medicine may have been poison! A trickster spirit poses as a samurai, and Ogin's dead body brings up even more unusual questions. (Geneon, \$24.98)

R.O.D. THE TV VOL. 4

Anita, Maggie, and Michelle launch an offensive strike against the Dokusensha to rescue Nenene. They'll face off against a slew of machine-gun wielding baddies and a paper master more powerful than they are! (Geneon, \$29.98)

SERAPHIM CALL

Twelve different girls hold twelve wishes and dreams deep within their hearts. They'll all meet at the Acropolis Tower to see if their dreams will come true. (Media Blasters, \$29.98)

SHOOTFIGHTER TEKKEN VOL. 3

When his father is hospitalized, Kiichi Miyazawa must take his father's place in the ring against World Pro-Wrestling champion, Iron Kiba. Will he be victorious, or will his family's legacy be destroyed? (Central Park Media, \$19.99)

SHRINE OF THE MORNING MIST VOL. 1

Yuzu Hieda, high school student and part-time Shinto priestess, is asked to lead a group of priestesses against a horde of demons intent on stealing her classmate, Tadahiro Amatsu, and his secret. (Media Blasters, \$29.98)

SHURA NO TOKI VOL. 1

The mysterious Mutsu clan is rumored to have mastered the weaponless art known as the Mutsu Enmei Style. Who would guess



BLOWN AWAY R.O.D. the TV's Wendy wonders where that wind is coming from.

that the young Yakumo Mutsu was the heir to this fighting style? (Media Blasters, \$29.95)

STELLVIA VOL. 2

Shima finds herself participating in a main event at the Foundation Field day celebrations. Are her piloting skills good enough to keep up with the Big Four? (Geneon, \$24.98)

TEKHNOLYZE VOL. 5

The Shapes continue to plague Lukuss and kill its citizens without mercy. In desperation, Organo and the Alliance join forces in an open and direct attack upon the Shapes in hopes of slowing down their forces. (Geneon, \$29.98)

TSUKIHIME VOL. 2

Roa continues to roam the streets, claiming more targets, but how can they destroy a man who's continuously being reincarnated? Meanwhile, Shiki continues to unravel the truth behind his mysterious past. (Geneon, \$29.98)

TWELVE KINGDOMS VOL. 9

Youko joins forces with a rebel group in order to dethrone the corrupt minister, Shoko. Things become messy when she discovers that a member of her own court is aiding Shoko's misdeeds. (Media Blasters, \$29.98)

WOLF'S RAIN VOL. 4

Kiba, Tsume, Toboe and Hige recover Cheza and continue on their way towards paradise with the Nobles hot on their heels. Joining them is Blue, the grey wolf-dog who once hunted them. (Bandai, \$29.98)

FREE SWAG**ZETA GUNDAM PENCIL SHARPENER FIGURES**

We don't really use a lot of pencils around the office, but we bought a whole case just to get ready for Bandai's *Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam* special edition box set, which comes with nine—count 'em, nine—pencil sharpener figures. Re-enact battles on your desk and keep your pencils obsessively sharp—that way, you can use them to stab your enemies if you catch them outside of their Mobile Suits. Oh, and you can suck up to your teacher, too! ■ SM



COMICS • CARDS • TOYS • ANIME • MANGA • GAMING • TV • MOVIES

WIZARD WORLD



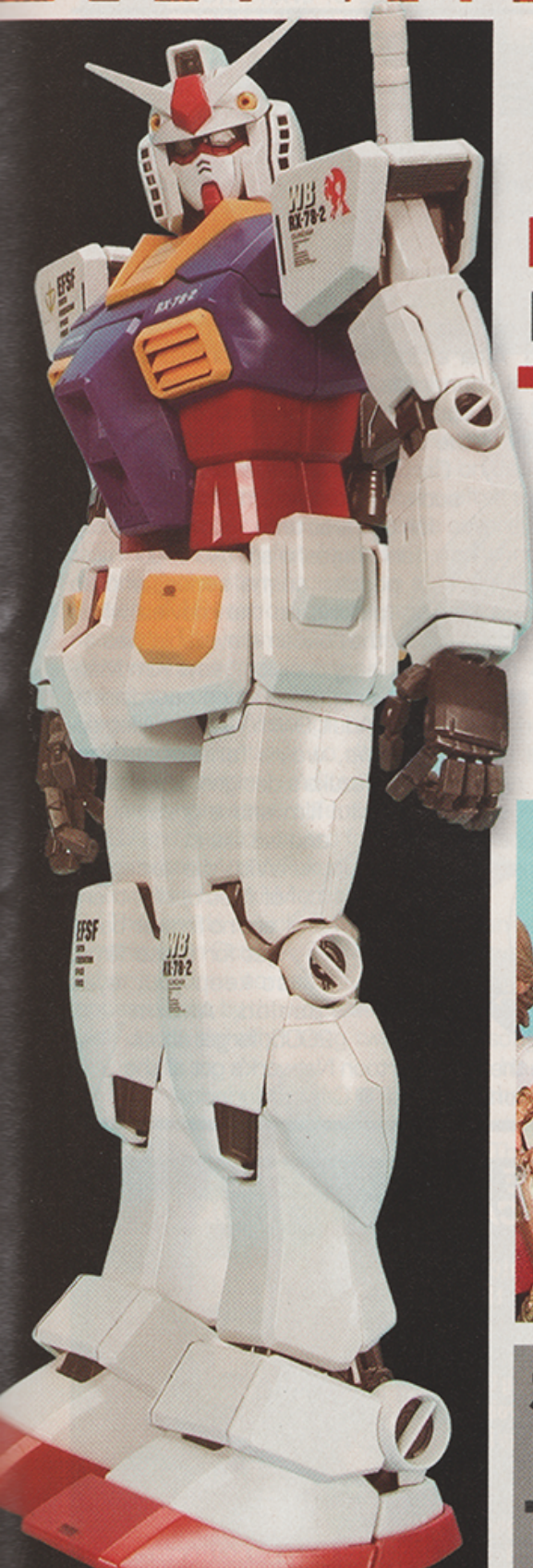
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WIZKIDS

OFFICIAL COMIC

BOOK GRADER



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FOUR PLAY

CARTOON NETWORK ORCHESTRATES QUARTET OF ANIME MOVIE PREMIERES

Hate the hassle of smuggling candy into the movie theater? Cartoon Network has the answer. The station is premiering four—count 'em, four—anime films in 2005, including *Metropolis*, the *Cowboy Bebop* movie and two *Inuyasha* films.

"It's an opportunity to get high-level, exciting action into the block," says Sean Akins, creative director of Toonami. "These movies are usually the crown jewel presentations of the franchise."

New Year's Day sees the debut of Osamu Tezuka's masterpiece, *Metropolis*. In the futuristic city-state of Metropolis, life is paradise. But Metropolis' perfection comes from total exploitation of the robots and working humans.

Then double your pleasure with not one but two *Inuyasha* movies. It's unknown at this time which two of the four *Inuyasha* movies are scheduled for broadcast, but all signs point to the first two, *Affections Touching Across Time* and *The Castle Beyond the Looking Glass*, both of which will have premiered on DVD. *Affections Touching Across Time* deals with a menacing monster

named Menomaru who threatens the very fabric of life in feudal Japan. In *The Castle Beyond the Looking Glass*, our heroes finally defeat the demon Naraku...but, as with all things in the world of *Inuyasha*, he doesn't stay dead!

Last but not least, check out the critically acclaimed *Cowboy Bebop: The Movie*. After a biochemical attack on Mars leaves hundreds dead, Spike and his crew of bounty hunters are set to take down the culprit—and turn a hefty profit.

Cartoon Network is excited to bring such films to the American audience for the first time. "*Cowboy Bebop* and *Inuyasha* are two of our most popular anime series, and so picking up the movies when they became available was an easy decision," says Kim Manning, production coordinator of Adult Swim. "As for *Metropolis*, we're fans of Osamu Tezuka's designs. It's a beautiful film and a great story, and we like it."

With the exception of *Metropolis*, there are no firm air dates yet for these films, so keep your eyes peeled. And in 2005, forget about

the theater—Cartoon Network's got all the movie action you need! ■ Caitlin Moriarty

OH BROTHER Inuyasha's sibling Sesshomaru protects his giant scarf at all costs.



COWBOY BEBOP

ODDS ARE...

WHAT OTHER MOVIE MASTERPIECES MIGHT MAKE IT TO CARTOON NETWORK?

Anime Insider accosted Sean Akins, Toonami's creative director, for the odds on the chance of other awesome anime films getting some Cartoon Network airtime.

1. SPIRITED AWAY AND CASTLE IN THE SKY

ODDS: 1,000,000,000,000:1. "Disney has the rights to most of Miyazaki's work locked up tighter than an

otaku's supply of Pocky. Except for..."

2. CASTLE OF CAGLIOSTRO

ODDS: 2:1. "Since Cartoon Network has the Lupin rights, there's a good chance we'll be able to air this movie."

3. GHOST IN THE SHELL

ODDS: 10:1. "Although this is a classic movie, it's almost 10 years old. But odds are much better—

about even—of CN snatching up the rights to the sequel *Innocence*."

4. THE ONE PIECE MOVIES

ODDS: 100:1. "Fox is airing the *One Piece* series, so CN probably couldn't get the rights to it."

5. YU YU HAKUSHO: POLTERGEIST REPORT

ODDS: 2:1. "Even odds, given the popularity of the series."

■ CM



NO WAY Chihiro and No-Face won't be watching Cartoon Network anytime soon.

MOVING ON IMPULSE

'GUNDAM SEED DESTINY'
HITS THE AIR IN JAPAN



The war isn't over! Just when you thought the Earth Alliance and ZAFT had made up, this October saw the premiere of *Gundam SEED Destiny*, the sequel to the supremely popular *Gundam SEED*, on Japanese television.

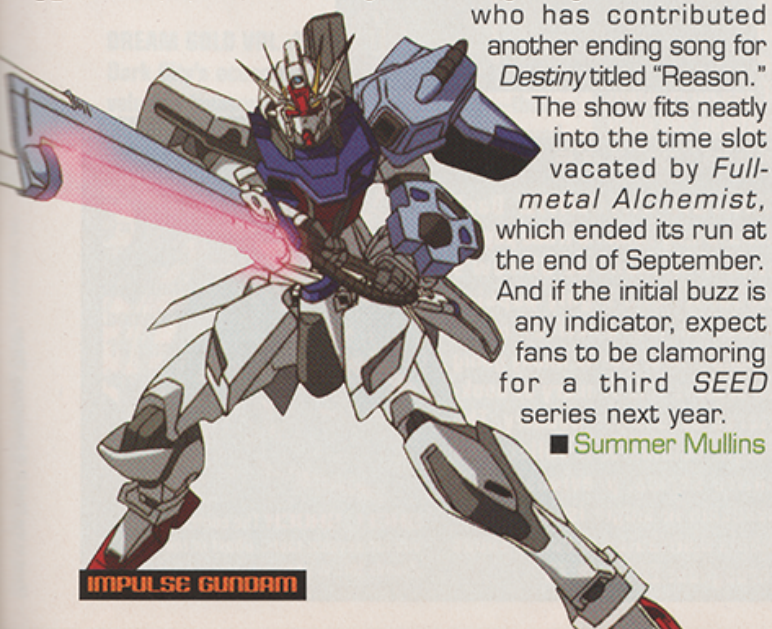
Destiny takes place two years after the end of *SEED's* Earth-ZAFT war and incorporates several characters from *SEED* (including fan-favorite pair Athrun and Cagalli), although the story focuses on a new main character, Shin Asuka, a 16-year-old coordinator born in the previously neutral Orb. The loss of Shin's parents during the Orb invasion of the first series compels him to join ZAFT, where he takes the place of Athrun Zala, who has defected to join Cagalli in Orb. Although a peace treaty has been signed, both sides continue to develop mobile suits (like Shin's *Impulse Gundam*) and tensions are high.

The impressive talents behind the original *Gundam SEED* are back on board for the 50-episode sequel, including director Mitsuo Fukuda, character designer Hisashi Hirai and writer Chiaki Morosawa.

Thousands of lucky fans across Japan attended a special premiere on October 3 in Tokyo, which was broadcast to six other locations across the nation. The festival also featured appearances by the voice actors and Nami Tamaki, the popular J-pop idol who sang two ending songs for *SEED* and who has contributed another ending song for *Destiny* titled "Reason."

The show fits neatly into the time slot vacated by *Full-metal Alchemist*, which ended its run at the end of September. And if the initial buzz is any indicator, expect fans to be clamoring for a third *SEED* series next year.

■ Summer Mullins

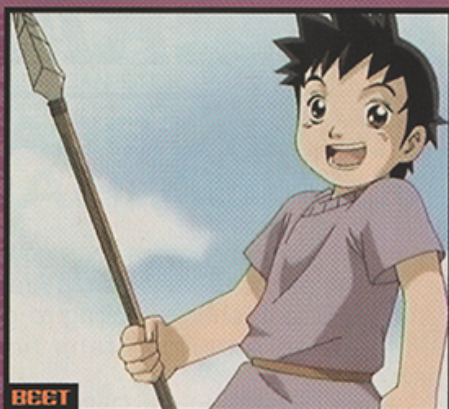


TUNE IN TOKYO

THE LATEST ANIME DEBUTS ON
JAPANESE TELEVISION

BEET THE VANDEL BUSTER

Based on the manga (released in the U.S. by Viz), Beet is a spunky youngster in a land over-run with dangerous demons called Vandels. He dreams of becoming a Vandel Buster just like his hero, Zenon. Barreling through his Buster training, Beet and his childhood sweetheart Poala take on the blood-thirsty Vandel Beltorze, who's got it in for Beet...and the rest of humanity, to boot.

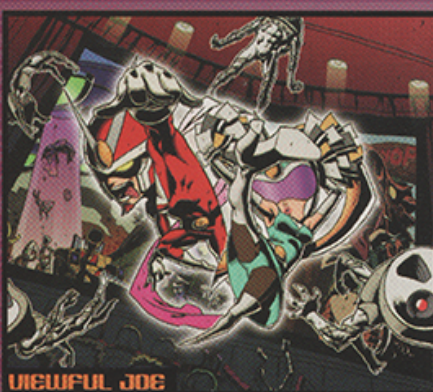


MY-HIME

Short-tempered redhead Mai is on her way to her first day at Fuuka Academy when a mysterious red light in the sky connects her to a girl named Mikoto found floating in the water. A spandex-clad girl named Natsuki, armed with a mechanical beast, shows up to warn Mai—and all girls imbued with the enigmatic "Hime" powers—to stay the heck away from Fuuka Academy. Naturally, they ignore her warning.

TSUKUYOMI MOON PHASE

Photographer Morioka Kohei visits a German castle where he encounters an imprisoned vampiric catgirl named Hazuki who tries to drink his vitae. Kohei breaks the castle's seal and escapes, only to find upon returning to Japan that Hazuki is waiting for him!



VIEWTIFUL JOE

A regular trip to the movies goes all too wrong for a slacker named Joe when his favorite bombastic sentai action movie literally sucks him—and his girlfriend—into the "Viewtiful World," where Joe must take up the mantle of Viewtiful Joe and bring evil down to its knees, all while wearing colorful spandex and striking all sorts of silly poses.

■ Zac Bertschy

AMERICA STRIKES BACK

SEVEN SEAS TO SHIP AMERICAN MANGA BACK TO JAPAN

For years, manga has only gone one way across the Pacific, from Japan to America; now, a new U.S. publisher is looking to go the other way, while giving American fans first crack at its new manga.

Jason DeAngelis and Dallas Middaugh of Seven Seas, a brand new American manga publisher, are looking to change what manga means to American consumers. "We want to do stories that have a broad appeal in all genres," said Seven Seas' creative director and president Jason DeAngelis. "We want to do very high quality work...stuff we can be proud of, something the Japanese will be impressed with."

The publisher's first four titles, *Amazing Agent Luna*, *No Man's Land*, *Blade for Barter* and *Last Hope* span a variety of familiar genres, but Seven Seas' approach to the manga business is anything but routine.

"A lot of the stuff that comes out is good," says Seven Seas co-founder and CEO Dallas Middaugh, who also maintains a position at manga publisher Del Rey, "but we really want to tap into the dynamic of Japanese manga. We're closely modeling our books on Japanese manga to capture that energy. I don't think the potential for American manga has even been touched." The initial run of books from Seven Seas will read right-to-left, a first for American-produced manga. This is done in order to make exportation to Japan a viable concept, which is also a first in the American manga scene. "What we're doing, we think it's authentic," adds DeAngelis. "We're looking to replicate Japanese production quality."

The first four books will retail for \$10.99 each and be available in the standard manga-sized format in February 2005. Seven Seas plans on rolling out another set of new series in summer 2005, including a handful of collaborations between American writers and Japanese artists. Samples of Seven Seas' work can be seen at www.gomanga.com. ■ **Zac Bertschy**



SETTIN' SAIL Three of Seven Seas' comics, which hope to capture the authentic manga style.

QUICK READS

PAGE TURNIN' NEWS CLIPS

NUMBER ONE SON Manga giants Viz and TOKYOPOP have overtaken comics juggernaut DC Comics as the country's largest publishers of graphic novels, says a recent report released by entertainment industry website IGV2. Notably, the report is based on volume of published works rather than sales; both Viz and TOKYOPOP have more titles in production than DC Comics.

GET MOVING The U.K.'s Boychild Productions is aiming for publication of its manga anthology magazine, *Manga Mover*, in North America for the first time this winter. The book includes 68 pages of original content, including a new story by *The Ring* manga-ka Sakura Mizuki and work by Tomomo Amemiya, marking the first time Amemiya's work has been released in English.

MANGA MACHINE Dark Horse's long-awaited trade paperback of Masamune Shirow's elaborate and highly popular *Ghost in the Shell 2: Man-Machine Interface* is finally going on shelves this January at bookstores across the country. The single volume will collect the entire series, previously only available in single issue installments distributed in comic shops throughout 2003. ■ **ZB**



SHELL SHOCK The controversial and fan service-tastic *Ghost in the Shell 2* lands this winter.

COMING COMICS

MANGA TO WATCH FOR THIS WINTER!

DECEMBER

A.I. LOVE YOU VOL. 6

Forty hits an endangered species, and Hitoshi and the gang go on a diet. The creature is on the mend, but expensive diet food has made Hitoshi's bank account almost extinct! Ken Akamatsu (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

BATTLE VIXENS VOL. 5

Now that she has the Hyakuhekitou, Hakufu wants nothing more than to fight the strongest Toshi in the land. Yuji Shiozaki (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL #96

Anotsu assembles a group of the finest Itto-ryu warriors and plans an attack fueled by revenge. Rin and Manji attempt to recover only to be interrupted by the arrival of Giichi. Hiroaki Samura (Dark Horse, \$2.99)

COMIC PARTY VOL. 4

Kazuki's doujinshi career has come to a halt while he decides if he should stick with his time-tested parodies or attempt original material. Can an incognito voice actress help him decide? Sekihiko Inui (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

D.N. ANGEL VOL. 5

Someone wants to kill Daisuke and Dark has gone missing! Without the nefarious thief, Daisuke is helpless and launches a search-and-rescue mission to find him. Yukiru Sugisaki (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

DRAGON VOICE VOL. 2

The Beat Men have nowhere to perform since rival group Privee are booking up all the venues. Now they're stuck outdoors, and their future looks cloudy with a chance of rain. Yuriko Nishiyama (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

DREAM GOLD VOL. 1

Dark City's economy relies on the excavation of valuable treasure. However, only Knights—those who have passed the rigorous tests—are allowed to hunt for the riches! Tatsuhiro Nakanishi (ADV Manga, \$9.99)

ENMUSU VOL. 1

Gisuke Arikawa has just inherited a lucky charm, complete with live-in maid! If he can find the other 14 charms, he's guaranteed a life of wealth and happiness. Takahiro Seguchi (ADV Manga, \$9.99)

THE FIRST KING ADVENTURE VOL. 1

Prince Valum Lune Titu is on a quest to collect tokens from the Masters of the Spirit. During his journey, he meets four Japanese kids who join him on his adventure. Moyamu Fujino (ADV, Manga \$9.99)

FLAME OF RECCA VOL. 9

Recca, Fuko and Domon face down a bevy of supernatural demons in a terrifying race against the clock to save Yanagi. Mobuyuki Anzai (Viz, \$9.95)

FRUITS BASKET VOL. 6

Kyo is forced to confront the inner monsters he's tried so hard to avoid. Unable to turn to the Sohma family for help, Kyo finds comfort in Tohru's friendship. Natsuki Takaya (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

GEOBREEDERS VOL. 3

A vacation is in order for the Kagura Security Company and it's none too soon! Will the team be able to enjoy a little R&R, or will weird happenings cut their break short? Akihiro Ho (CPM Manga, \$9.99)

GETBACKERS VOL. 6

Ban and Shido are ready to duke it out against the altered bodies of the Magami brothers. Meanwhile, Ginji is trying to get used to his new partner, Dr. Jackal. Rando Ayamine, Yuya Aoki (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)



FLAME PLAYER Plucky ninja Recca knows more than a thing or two about fire fighting.

GRAVITATION VOL. 9

Brandnew record label XMR is all ready to release Shuichi's big U.S. debut album. In celebration, Shuichi has decided to turn over a whole new leaf...a leaf without Eiri! Maki Murakami (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

HOT PICK

PRINCESS TUTU

By Mizuo Shinonome (ADV Manga, \$9.99)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT Ahiro is a klutzy young wannabe dancer who has always dreamed of performing together onstage with a handsome prince. One day, after running into the two top male ballet students, Mytho and Fakir, Ahiro has a chance encounter with a beautiful tutu and an even more beautiful shopkeeper, who gives Ahiro a mystical egg pendant that transforms her into the enigmatic Princess Tutu! As the Princess, Ahiro uses her newfound abilities to fight evil and collect the scattered pieces of her fantasy Prince's heart. Will the power of dance be enough to overcome villainy and reunite her Prince with his memories?

WHY IT'S COOL Just when you thought every aspect of the magical girl genre had been covered, along comes *Princess Tutu* and turns the world of dance upside down. The story is whacked-out fairy tale euphoria, with a crazy cast of fantasy characters unlike anything else in the genre. Superhero ballerinas, jive-talking cats and a boatload of beautiful boys pepper Shinonome's most celebrated work. Combined with appealing artwork and brilliant humor, *Princess Tutu* is a magically delicious package. ■ Liann Cooper



Art by Mizuo Shinonome
Story by Ikuko Itoh & Jun-ichi Satoh

IT FIGURES

MANGA PREMIUMS RULE THE ROOST

Still need a few more gifts to give to your friends and family? Blow their minds with a Japanese limited edition manga volume—then they'll be getting a sweet action figure premium, too. Check out your local Japanese bookstore to grab these stocking stuffers!

ELEMENTAR GERAD

Comic Blade's hit action series Elementar Gerad had a breakout character in the comely Ren, so the publishers saw fit to release this beautifully sculpted figure of the character along with volume 5 of the manga.



MYSTICAL SLEUTH LOKI RAGNAROK

The hotly anticipated fourth volume of Sakura Kinoshita's smash hit mystery manga was packaged with a limited release item: a very sweet constructable figure of Loki himself sitting among his books.

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION

Volume 8 of Yoshiyuki Sadamoto's spectacular EVA manga came with this intensely detailed and highly poseable Rei figure, which came bundled alongside a throne for EVA's blue-haired queen to perch upon.



YOTSUBATO!

June's issue of *Dengeki Daioh*, the comic magazine in which Azumanga Daioh author Azuma Kiyohiko's latest hit series Yotsubato! is published, came with an unbelievably cute and articulated figure of the manga's heroine, six-year old Yotsuba. ■ ZB



GUNDAM SEED VOL. 3

Kira and Athrun were once best friends but now fight on opposite sides. Friendships and mecha clash in this dramatic space story! Hajime Yatate, Yoshiyuki Tomino (Del Rey Manga, \$10.95)

HAPPY MANIA VOL. 11

Shigeta seeks solace at a hot springs only to be proposed to—in marriage and in business! Afterwards, Shigeta gets another sign that she and Takahashi are meant to be together. Moyoco Anno (TokyoPop, \$9.99)

INITIAL D VOL. 15

History is set to repeat itself as Kai Kogashiwa (son of Bunta's old archrival) seeks to reclaim his father's honor by demanding a race against Tak! Shuichi Shigeno (TokyoPop, \$9.99)

LOVE OR MONEY VOL. 1

Yenni runs a loan shark business at her school. Her grandma doesn't approve and orders her to quit and get married. If she doesn't, Yenni will be denied her grandma's inheritance! Sang-Eun Lee (TokyoPop, \$9.99)

NECK AND NECK VOL. 1

Dabin Choi likes family friend Eugene, but he only sees her as a "sister." If that weren't bad enough, the new guy in school is the son of her father's rival! Sun Hee Lee (TokyoPop, \$9.99)

RAVE MASTER VOL. 12

In order to save Elie from a fatal attack, a Rave Team member makes the ultimate sacrifice, which unleashes the power of Etherion. Hiro Mashima (TokyoPop, \$9.99)

RECORD OF LODOSS WAR: THE GREY WITCH VOL. 3

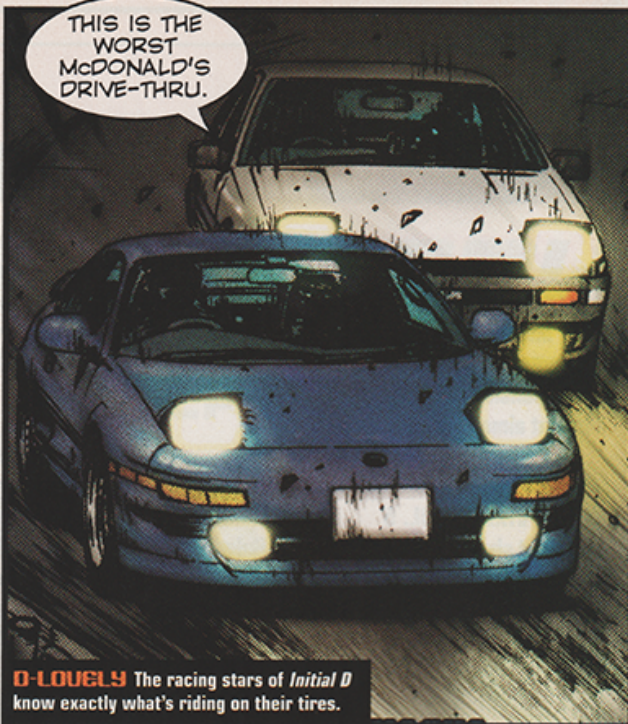
It's down to the final battle as Parn and his gang face off against the Grey Witch Karla. Extreme sacrifices will be made to save the land of Lodoss! Ryo Mizuno, Yoshiko Ochi (CPM Manga, \$9.99)

RURONI KENSHIN VOL. 10

The sakabato sword has been shattered, and it's up to Kenshin to seek out Arai Hakku'fu, the man who forged the original blade. Unfortunately, one of Shishio's "Ten Swords" is already on his trail. Nobuhiro Watsuki (Viz, \$7.95)

SAMURAI EXECUTIONER VOL. 3

Taking a break from the main storyline, this volume contains three insightful stories dealing with Asa and those around him and their amazing combat skills. Kazuo Koike, Goseki Kojima (Dark Horse, \$9.99)



D-LOVELY The racing stars of *Initial D* know exactly what's riding on their tires.

SHONEN JUMP VOL. 3 #2

Kick back and enjoy the latest installments of *One Piece*, *Hikaru no Go*, *Naruto*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and more! Various (Viz, \$4.99)

SLAYERS SUPER-EXPLOSIVE DEMON VOL. 7:

Lina, Gourry, Amelia, and Zelgadis band together to fight off some difficult demons on their road to discovering the truth behind the mysterious Claire Bible! Hajime Kanzaka, Shoko Yoshinaka (CPM Manga, \$9.99)

TENGA! RETROGICAL VOL. 1

The apartment complex Tengai-ya is rumored to be haunted. High school student Ryohi later discovers that odd people with super-powers occupy the building. Rin Asano (ADV Manga, \$9.99)

TRAMPS LIKE US VOL. 3

Sumire has a man in her life and his name isn't Momo. But when things start to unravel, can Sumire get Momo back? Or is Momo gone for good? Yayoi Ogawa (TokyoPop, \$9.99)

TRIGUN MAXIMUM VOL. 3

Vash and Wolfwood are up against a couple of tough cookies—Gray the Ninelives and the puppet master, Leonoff. Setting their differences aside, the two team up to take the bad guys down! Yasuhiro Nightow (Dark Horse, \$9.95)

THE WORLD OF NARUE VOL. 3

Kazuto is thrilled to have found the perfect Christmas present for Narue. But before he can give it to her, it's stolen by a super-smart rodent! Tomohiro Marukawa (CPM Manga, \$9.99)

W JULIET

Ito is your average schoolyard tomboy whose life is thrown into chaos when she's chosen to play Romeo in the school play! But who's playing Juliet? Emura (Viz, \$9.99)

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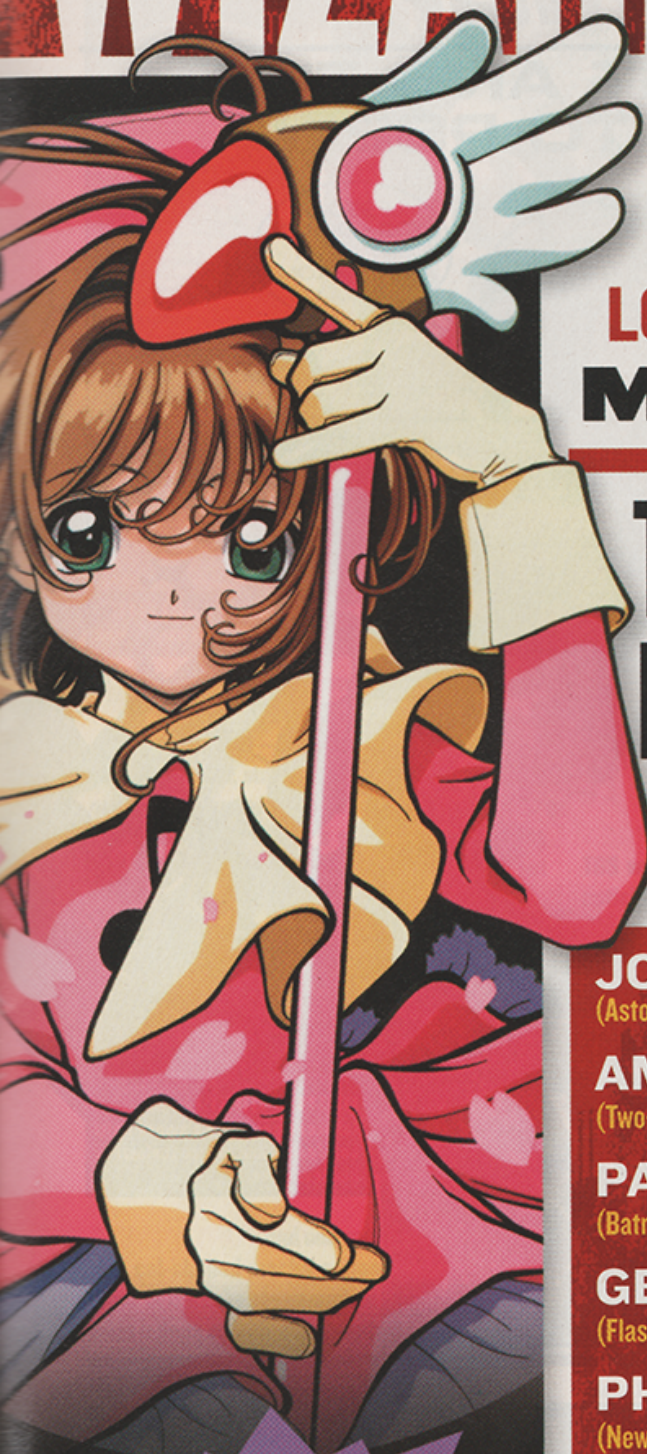
WIZARD WORLD



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GEOFF JOHNS
(Flash, JSA, Teen Titans writer)

PHIL NOTO
(New West artist)

JIMMY PALMIOTTI
(Hawkman, New West writer)

JOE QUESADA
(Marvel editor-in-chief)

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ANGEL IN AMERICA

'FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST AND THE BROKEN ANGEL' FLIES TO PS2

They've transformed themselves into a hit anime, flew off shelves as popular toys and became TV stars—but now *Fullmetal Alchemist*'s Elric brothers have their sights set on video games.

This January sees the American release of the first FMA game, *Fullmetal Alchemist and the Broken Angel*, on PlayStation 2. Based on the smash hit manga and anime series from creator Hiromu Arakawa, currently airing on Adult Swim, the 3D action game features the young alchemists Ed and Al Elric (Ed has the blond hair and metal limbs, while the younger Al inhabits the large but empty suit of armor).

The game starts when the train Ed and Al are riding to Central City is hijacked (as seen in episode 5 in the anime series), and continues as the brothers become embroiled in the affairs of the enigmatic Angelstein family. Players take control of Ed, unleashing devastating combos on enemies and gaining experience points, and can issue commands to his computer-controlled brother Al. What makes the game unique is Ed's alchemic ability to turn ordinary objects into useful tools—like turning a lamppost into a sword or a park bench into a cannon for Al to fire—using an easy-to-learn transmutation system. Several familiar characters show up to join the action as well, from the muscle-bound Major Armstrong to fire-wielding fan favorite Roy Mustang.

Surprisingly, the game actually predates the TV series and set the stage for what would become Japan's most popular new anime series. The cutscenes in the game were Studio Bones' first attempt at animating *Fullmetal Alchemist*. "All the characters [and] the original story in the game were all overseen by Arakawa-san, and that's how all the pictures and the characters developed," said Koji Taguchi, senior vice president of publicity at Square Enix.

Elric fans should mark January 18th on their calendars, the day both the video game from Square Enix and the first DVD from FUNimation are released. With a second video game already out in Japan and more on the way, there's still plenty to look forward to. ■ **Dominic Nguyen**



METAL MAN Edward (above) transmutes a sword (left) and deals some justice (below) in his new game.

BITS OF BYTES

HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST?

CARD CAPTOR CAMERA NHK Software announced an EyeToy game based on CLAMP's hit TV series *Card Captor Sakura*. Players will be able to capture Clow Cards along with Sakura and Kero-chan in a series of mini-games that allow you to put your face on an in-game character. The game releases this December in Japan.

NE-GAME-A Ken Akamatsu's smash hit manga series *Negima!* *Magister Negi Magi* will also be converted into a PS2 game by Konami this December. As you might expect, you play magical schoolteacher Negi himself as he adjusts to the teaching life, and earns the trust (and potential lust!) of his incredibly abundant female students.

TRIPLE THREAT Believe it or not, manga anthology *Shonen Jump*'s three biggest heroes, Monkey D. Luffy from *One Piece*, Goku from *Dragon Ball Z* and Naruto from *Naruto* are all going to appear together in a brand new fighting game for the Game Boy Advance called *Jump! Super Stars*. Only planned for Japan (for now), it should do big business there. ■ **ZB & DN**



ONE PIECE'S MONKEY D. LUFFY

KING OF GAMES

THE TOP TEN HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS YEAR'S TOKYO GAME SHOW



GUTS AND GLORY Berserk's Black Swordsman stakes his claim on your gaming time.

The Tokyo Game Show—Japan's version of E3, the largest video game exposition in the world—hit Tokyo like a meteor this past September, stocked to the rafters with brand new games, and plenty of updates to hotly anticipated ones. This year's show drew a record crowd of 160,000 attendees there to check out the game goodness.

BERSERK: MILLENNIUM FALCON

The Sega-Sammy booth featured an all-new *Berserk* game, based on the popular anime, in all its gory glory. It stars burly swordsman Guts and his gargantuan sword doing what they do best: unleashing unbridled carnage on the forces of evil. We're guessing the name will change for an American release.

BUMPY TROT And odd name for an odd game; this cel-shaded mecha action-adventure takes place in a wacky steampunked 19th century, and adds a dose of DDR-style rhythm into play as the main characters makes music when not driving his "Trot" mecha.

DEVIL MAY CRY 3 Capcom's gothic action game returns for a third round. Fans of the series thrilled to Dante's new moves, but remain skeptical that the game will make up for the mistakes in the second game.

DRAGON QUEST VIII Enix's trademark series wasn't neglected either, with *Dragon Quest VIII* garnering plenty of attention. The eighth iteration of Japan's most beloved RPG franchise may have new

graphics to go with the traditional Akira Toriyama designs, but it's fundamentally unchanged play-wise from the series so popular in Japan for so long.

FINAL FANTASY VII: DIRGE OF CERBERUS

One of the prime destinations at TGS was Square Enix's booth, where the hotly anticipated sequel to Square Enix's iconic RPG *Final Fantasy VII*, *Dirge of Cerberus*, was seen for the first time anywhere. The game takes place after the *FFVII* movie, *Advent Children*, and stars the enigmatic loner Vincent Valentine in this third-person action-shooter, which is an unexpected break from the traditional *Final Fantasy* franchise.

FINAL FANTASY XII Surprisingly, the next installment in Square Enix's RPG juggernaut, *Final Fantasy XII*, was represented only by a looping movie of game-play footage—footage that showed redesigned characters and a slightly tweaked setting.

GUILTY GEAR ISUKA Daisuke Ishiwatari's *Guilty Gear* series returned, becoming even more psychedelic with the four-player *Guilty Gear Isuka*. Whether playing on teams or in a massive free-for-all, it was both



FINAL FANTASY XIII



DEVIL MAY CRY 3

an exercise in controlled chaos and a blast to play.

ROMANCING SAGA: MINSTREL SONG

Another old franchise was given new life as *Romancing SaGa: Minstrel Song* made its public debut. A PS2 remake of the 1992 Super Nintendo RPG, this update will be fully voiced and the characters have been redesigned.

WANDA AND THE COLOSSUS

Fans of the cult-favorite *Ico* should be ecstatic to hear about this second game from *Ico*'s programmers. Details are scarce, but the hero rides a horse and wields a sword, while the Colossus was shown in three different, unbelievably huge forms, in the best environments seen on PS2.

WILD ARMS: THE FOURTH DETONATOR

Sony showed off another remake, *Wild Arms: The 4th Detonator*, which is a re-imagining of the original Playstation sleeper hit. The combat system and even the art style have been revamped, making it an entirely new experience.



VINCENT VALENTINE

■ DN

RELEASE SCHEDULE

WE PICK 'EM, YOU PLAY 'EM. HERE'S WHAT'S COMING SOON...

DECEMBER

BATTLE ASSAULT 3 FEATURING GUNDAM SEED

With 33 playable Gundams spanning nearly the entire Gundam franchise, get ready to rumble! This mecha brawler has a story mode, a versus mode, tag team, survival and cooperation play for extreme versatility. (Bandai, PS2)

DRAGON BALL Z BUDOKAI 2

Atari's popular brawler lands on Gamecube for Round 2; play as a myriad of your favorite DBZ Characters and fight your way through the game's Deep Story mode. (Atari, Gamecube)

GUN GRIFFON: ALLIED STRIKE

Game Arts and Tecmo hope to add to the Xbox's pantheon of mech games



SORA

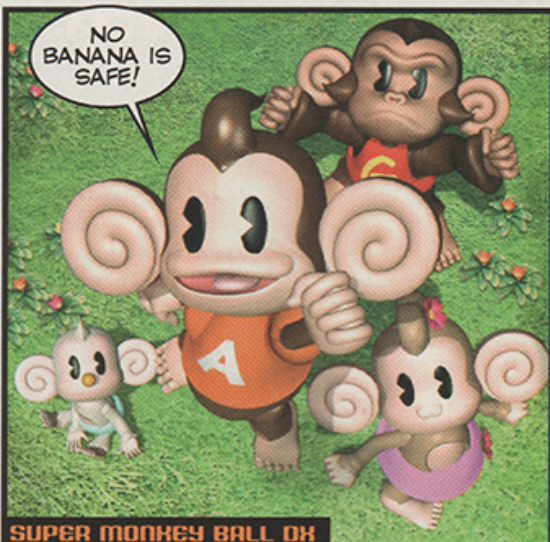
by reviving a franchise that flourished on the Sega Saturn. *Gun Griffon* offers blazingly fast Xbox Live multi-player, 20 detailed mechs and a host of other features that differentiate it from other, slower mech combat-based games. (Tecmo, Xbox)

GRAN TURISMO 4

The world's most popular racing series returns to the PlayStation 2 this Christmas, complete with an all-new roster of meticulously detailed cars, exciting new tracks and an unbelievable wealth of customizable features sure to set any racing fan's heart a-flutter. (Sony, PS2)

KINGDOM HEARTS: CHAIN OF MEMORIES

The story of Sora and his keyblade continues on



SUPER MONKEY BALL DX

the Game Boy Advance, just in time to whet people's appetites for *Kingdom Hearts II*. In his quest to be reunited with his friends, Sora must traverse dozens of Disney-themed dungeons and fend off seemingly endless hordes of Heartless minions. (Square Enix, GBA)

MARIO PARTY 6

The latest iteration of *Mario Party* adds microphone support to its already robust lineup of mini-games. While Nintendo is keeping mum about how much the game will support the new GameCube microphone, there will at least be a quiz game that uses the mic to answer questions. (Nintendo, GameCube)

MARIO PARTY ADVANCE

Don't let your GameCube-owning friends have all the fun—take the party with you with the Game Boy version of *Mario Party*. With over 60 mini-games to choose from and a host of weird gadgets from finger x-rays to compatibility meters, *Mario Party Advance* promises just as much fun as the home version. (Nintendo, GBA)

MEGAMAN X8

The eighth installment in Capcom's popular franchise finds the Blue Bomber and two of his super-powered and highly specialized robot friends. *X8* introduces tag team gameplay, enabling you to select between two characters out in the middle of a level for added mayhem and destruction. (Capcom, PS2)

SUPER MONKEY BALL DX

Sega's lovable monkeys take to the PS2 as Aiai, Mimi and the others navigate strange landscapes to get to the goal. Besides an unbelievably addicting and fun single-player mode, *Super Monkey Ball DX* still sports all the mini-games that made the GameCube version such a blast at parties. (Sega, PS2)

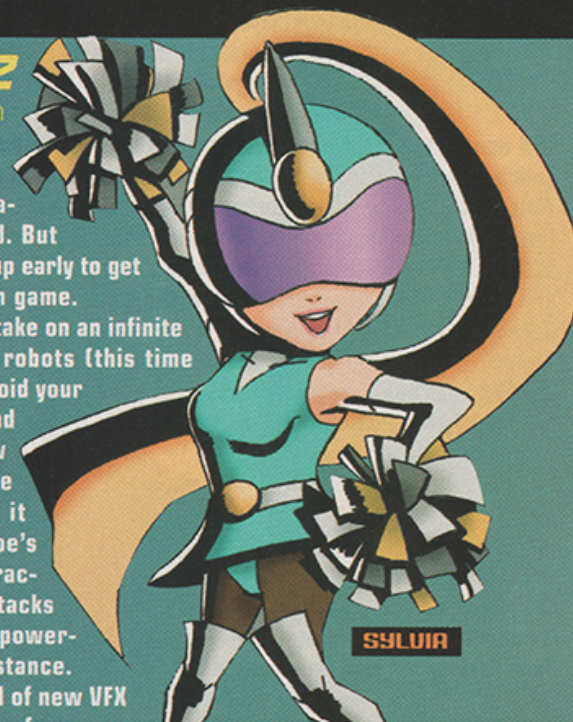
HOT PICK

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

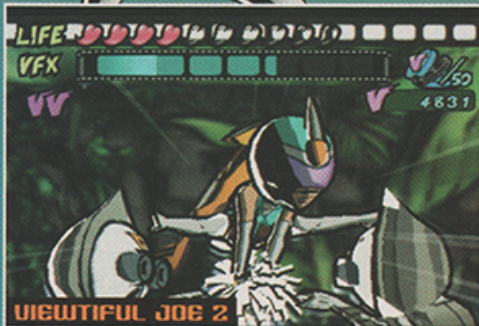
Coming November 18 from Capcom on PS2 and GameCube. The first *Viewtiful Joe* game was an instant classic; gorgeous, innovative, fun, funny and incredibly hard. But it wasn't so hard you shouldn't line up early to get this sequel to the amazing platform game.

In Joe's latest adventure, you'll take on an infinite number of bizarre skeleton-faced robots (this time with an army of devious tricks to avoid your attacks), colossal boss monsters and a bevy of challenging levels that blow the first game out of the water. The best part is, you won't be doing it alone; *Viewtiful Joe 2* includes Joe's girlfriend Sylvia as a playable character. Sylvia specializes in ranged attacks with a laser gun; what she lacks in powerful punches she makes up for in distance.

The game also includes a handful of new VFX powers in addition to the old favorites from the first game. Joe can still slow down time, speed it up and zoom in, and now, he can also replay his actions! If you select the Replay power, Joe's moves are recorded and can be played back to do up to three times the damage delivered by the first hit. Expect the same bizarre sense of humor, outlandish graphics and memorable characters that made the first game a cult smash. Henshin a-go-go, baby! ■ Zac Bertschy



SYLVIA



VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

THE STUFF YOU WANT!



Wizard World Tour shirts (\$20) as modeled by Nenna & Dazza

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HELLO, I'M KENSHIRO,
FIST OF THE NORTH
STAR.

MY HEAD-EXPLODING
FIGHTING TECHNIQUE WILL
BE YOUR GUIDE TO THE
HOLIDAY APOCALYPSE.

KENSHIRO'S
HOLIDAY
PICKS!

HO. HO. HO.



FOR THE PET LOVER

Share director Mamoru Oshii's love for basset hounds with this *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* "Gabriel C" vinyl figure of Batou's dog in the movie, for only \$25. Attentive-looking, beautifully sculpted and absolutely perfect for your desk or shelf, we guarantee that this 7" long pooch won't make any messes in your home.

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www.toyvault.com

WHAT
SMELLS LIKE
PEEP



FOR SOMEONE WITH TOO MUCH TIME ON THEIR HANDS



Though only 1:48 scale, the \$18.99 Aerial Battle Frame Model Kit is both sturdy and resembles the mecha from the hit anime series, *Martian Successor Nadesico*. Easy to build, its parts snap together to form a great-looking 6 1/2" tall, articulated model, with authentic-looking decals.

www.bandai.com

I CAN
KILL THAT.



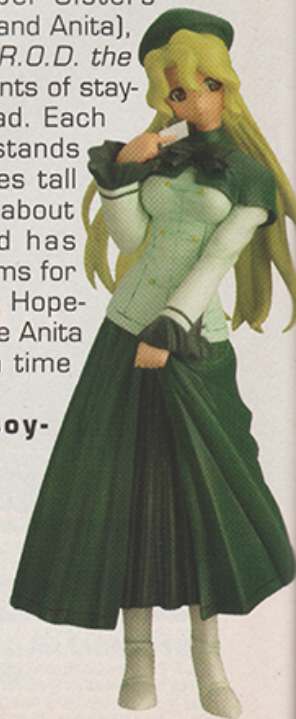
FOR THE BIBLIOPHILE

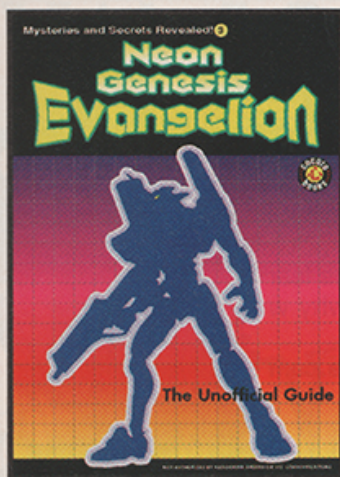
Since avid readers already have a ton of books, what can you get them for the holidays? Easy—

statues of the Paper Sisters (Maggie, Michelle and Anita), stars of Geneon's *R.O.D. the TV* and patron saints of staying up late to read. Each Yamato piece stands

about 5 inches tall and runs about \$25, and has variant arms for poseability. Hopefully, a statue of little Anita will be available in time for your birthday!

www.yamatotoy-susa.com





FOR THE CONSPIRACY THEORIST

Many theories still exist after the *Evangelion* series and movies' conclusion, but Cocoro Books' *Neon Genesis Evangelion: The Unofficial Guide* can finally put them to rest—or at least explain them in an organized and easy-to-read format—for \$11.95. With cross-referenced glossaries,

timelines and more, Eva fans can further enjoy this anime classic. www.dhp-online.com

FOR THE SLEEPYHEAD

Give youngsters a reason to look forward to the day when they wake up to the Card Captor Sakura Alarm Clock! This 8-inch clock features Kero and Sakura on a pedestal base, with a tilted clock face and logo, for only \$29.99.

www.geneon-ent.com



FOR THE ASPIRING ARTIST

Many otaku know that an important part of achieving the "anime look" in drawing comes from bright, colorful colors and shades. Copic's Manga Wallet 24 Sketch Set, for \$118.95, is exactly what professionals use for bright, vibrant masterpieces. www.copicmarker.com



FOR THE PERFECT DANCE MACHINE

Whether you dance or not, *Dance Dance Revolution* is addictive enough to get you on your feet—so why not do it in style? The \$109.95 RedOctane Ignition 2.0 Pad (Dual Platform Edition) has raised buttons for no-look playing whose measurements perfectly match the arcade edition, and a dense foam insert for support and comfort. www.redoctane.com



FOR THE CARD CARRYING OTAKU

The problem about going to card-gaming tournaments is that you never know what cards to bring to customize your decks on the fly. Never worry again with Ultra Pro's Specialty Series Portable Gaming Case, for \$24.95. Five secure compartments hold cards in sleeves, with extra room to spare for all your gaming accessories and needs. www.ultra-pro.com



FOR THOSE WHO ARE ABOUT TO ROCK



FOR THOSE WHO ARE ABOUT TO ROCK

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A CD makes a great gift for any otaku buddy, and thankfully nowadays there are plenty of anime soundtracks to choose from—maybe too many. That's why we've come up with the best choices for your friends' ears!

ROCK

L'ARC-EN-CIEL, *CLICKED SINGLES BEST 13*

No current Japanese pop or rock band needs less of an introduction to anime (or music!) fans than L'Arc-en-Ciel. And now you can lay hands on a special re-release of the legendary band's best hits collection, which features additional liner notes and lyrics. The track listing is half anime hits, half pop smashes, and all rockin' fun! **Tofu Records**



POP

SISTER PRINCESS OST: *MY SWEET TWELVE ANGELS*

Sweet as stick candy but less likely to give you cavities, these poppy melodies will charm your ear! The original 12 Japanese voice actresses of Wataru's sisters in Sister Princess perform two character-based tunes (or "image songs") each. Undeniably catchy! **Geneon Anime Music**

ELECTRONICA

TEKNOLOGY OST: *MUSIC ONLY MUSIC BUT MUSIC*

You won't want to take this driving soundtrack out of your CD player (although your roommates or parents may force you to). From the first pulsing techno track by trance doctors Juno Reactor to the closing song by superstar Gackt, this CD delivers solidly good, energetic beats and imaginative instrumentals that will keep any party grooving. **Geneon Anime Music**



INSTRUMENTAL

GHOST IN THE SHELL: *STAND ALONE COMPLEX OST 2*

The great goddess Yoko Kanno returns with her stimulating second *Stand Alone Complex* soundtrack. The 21 tracks mix jazz, techno, rock and other styles in a blend that only the talented Kanno could pull off; this album is a perfect choice for anyone who likes a variety of

music. **Bandai Music ■ Summer Mullins**

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What better inspiration to hit the books than gazing at the lovely *Please Teacher!* Mizuho in Red Swimsuit Resin Statue?

Standing at 13" tall and at a mere \$120, this teacher will help us learn all-new reasons why we love school.

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If you're supposed to keep your friends close and your enemies even closer, then you should keep the *Transformers Starscream Mini-Statue* always at your side, for only \$64.99. Perfect in any collection, the megalomaniacal (and whiny) Decepticon also has a metal rod so he can "hover" over his base.

www.palisadestoy.com



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Never getting stuck on a level again. Action Replay Max for the PS2 has over 50,000 codes for strength, ammo, health and more, or you can download more using your PC or PS2 Broadband. When you're done gaming, play any-region DVDs, MP3 music, DivX



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THE BEST CHRISTMAS EVA

Evangelion is rife with Christian symbolism, and now it's rife with Santa himself! These kawaii figures show Eva's most popular dysfunctional family in holiday outfits, but the only thing they'll be giving each other is misunderstanding and pain. Sigh.

EVANGELION CHRISTMAS FIGURES



ALL BOXED IN

Mother always warned us to wear a clean pair of underwear, in case there was some kind of accident...like if a Gundam were suddenly to attack our colony. These Gundam boxers prove that in Japan, underpants can sometimes be an okay Christmas present. Sometimes.



A FULL PLATE

Tokimeki Memorial is a crazy popular dating simulation videogame series. How popular? So popular that its merchandise includes not just Christmas merchandise, not just dinner plates, but Christmas-themed dinner plates. And they sell to *Tokimeki* otaku for scads of yen.

■ Miguel A. E. Esquivel



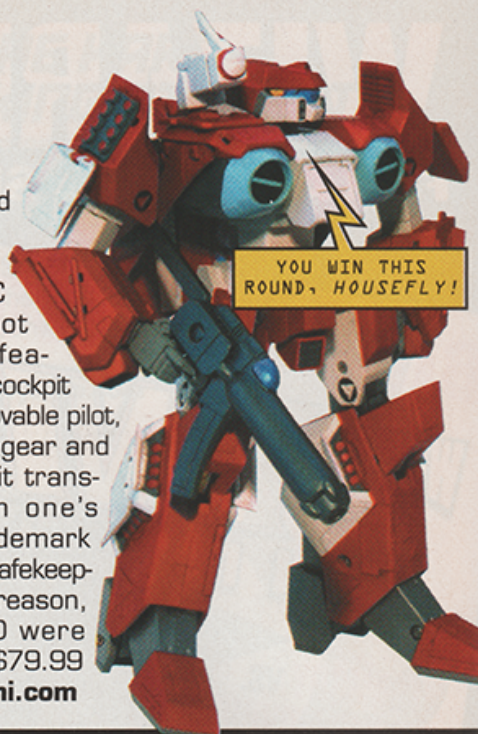
FOR THE TECHNO-GEEK

Fans can revisit the classic that started it all with the new Ghost in the Shell Trading Figures, for only \$5.99 each. The 3-4" PVC collectibles are blind-packaged, so you can wind up with Batou, Motoko, "Young" Motoko, the Section 6 tank, or busts of Motoko or the Puppet Master. www.yamatotoysusa.com



FOR THE MECHA MANIAC

Ultra-detailed and standing at 12" tall, the Robotech: New Generation MPC VFA-6Z Bartley not only has tons of features—like opening cockpit hatches with a removable pilot, retractable landing gear and rubber tires—but it transforms, too! Each one's packaged in a trademark "book" style box for safekeeping, and with good reason, too—only 15,000 were ever made, for only \$79.99 each! www.toytami.com



YOU WIN THIS ROUND, HOUSEFLY!

FOR YOUR FASHIONABLE LITTLE SISTER



Two's better than one, but since you can mix and match everything in the new Evangelion Pinky toys series, the combinations are nearly endless, and so is the fun. Both Rei and Asuka come as a pair for \$19.99, equipped with trendy pants, shirts, and cute Angel accessories.

FOR YOUR CLASSMATE

Passing paper notes in class is a thing of the past thanks to the Eye-Link Communicator. Type messages on a miniature QWERTY keyboard and send them silently up to 200 feet away—even through walls. Scroll through your own messages on an awesome LCD screen headset! Each pair goes for \$49.95. www.wildplanet.com



ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS LOVE...I MEAN, BLOOD. YES. BLOOD. YOU CAN GO NOW.



**J-POP, J-ROCK + SOUNDTRACK
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WIZARD

ANIME INSIDE

#19

THE TRUTH BEHIND

**SAMURAI
CHAMPLOO**

GHOST IN THE SHELL
SEASON ONE DIRECTOR'S
COMMENTARY

**MORE
FULLMETAL
ALCHEMIST!**

DECEMBER 2004
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THE A.I. PLAYERS PRESENT

THE CELL WHO STOLE CHRISTMAS

ON A HILL ATOP WHOVILLE, WHERE CHRISTMAS WAS SACRED, STOOD A VILLAIN NAMED CELL, WHO'S FULL UP WITH HATRED.



"THIS YEAR I'LL STEAL CHRISTMAS!" SAID CELL WITH A FROWN, SO HE DONNED SANTA GEAR AND SPED DOWN TO TOWN.



CELL BROKE INTO WHOS' HOUSES, TAKING ARMLoadS OF STUFF! HE STOLE GIFTS OF ARTBOOKS, DVDS AND THEIR PLUSH!



BUT WHEN CELL RETURNED HOME HE REALIZED SOMETHING WAS WRONG. THE WHOS WEREN'T SAD AT ALL: THEY JUST SANG A SONG!



AT THE SIGHT CELL FELT SOMETHING LIKE NEVER BEFORE: HIS SMALL HEART POWERED UP TO SUPER SAIYAN 4!



BUT THEN GOKU ARRIVED WITH A TREAT JUST FOR CELL- A KI BLAST TO THE BACK THE SAIYAN GAVE WITH A YELL.



AND AS GOKU FLEW OFF, HE SAID THIS WITH A SMIRK: "DON'T STEAL MY CRAP-AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS, JERK!"

TWO FRIENDS
ONE DESTINY

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